

STUDIES IN GALATIANS

Study #9: Galatians 4:21-5:1

“You Were Running Well”

(Until “Whee! I Am Free” Became, “Boy! I Am in Bondage”)

You Were Running Well UNTIL: “Whee! I Am Free” Became, “Boy! I Am in Bondage” – Galatians 4:21-5:1

Key verse 5:7 —“You were running well; who cut in on you that you should not obey the truth?”

Study #9, Galatians 4:21-5:1. I love this study because the last verse is the key verse so you’re going to have to listen all the way through.

It’s a great passage and actually the heart of the whole message.

Remember when Paul writes a letter, he starts personal. Then he uses the teaching section or the doctrinal section. Then he’ll have practical at the end of it. You can almost divide every one of his epistles in that way.

Personal (chapters 1 and 2),

Doctrinal (chapters 3 and 4), and

Practical (chapters 5 and 6).

It's just unfortunate that man divided the chapters this way because this first verse should have been the end of chapter 4 because it really is the summation of everything that he's had to teach.

I want to tell you something, this is a dangerous study. And if you're fearful and anxious about your eternal salvation or the relationship to the Law and the sermon on the mount and the ten commandments, I just want you to get ready because you're going to have to brace yourself.

This is one of the most powerful statements. It's just an awesome passage of scripture and I'm so grateful I get to teach it. And I'm so glad you're here today.

Listen to this email I received recently.

In Florida an atheist created a case against Easter and Passover holy days. He hired an attorney to bring a discrimination case against Christians and Jews and observances of their holy days.

The argument was that it was unfair that atheists had no such recognized days. The case was brought before a judge. After listening to the passionate presentation by the lawyer, the judge banged his gavel declaring case dismissed.

The lawyer immediately stood objecting to the ruling saying, “Your honor, how could you possibly dismiss this case? The Christians have Christmas, Easter and others. The Jews have Passover, Yom Kippur and Hanukkah, yet my client and all other atheists have no such holidays.”

The judge leaned forward in his chair saying, “But you do. Your client council is woefully ignorant.”

The lawyer said, “Your honor, we are unaware of any special observance or holiday for atheist.”

The judge said, “The calendar says April 1st is April Fool’s Day. Psalm 14:1 states ‘The fool says in his heart there is no God.’ This is the opinion of this court that your client says there is no God, then he’s a fool. Therefore April 1st is his day. Court adjourned!”

As you know, I get lots of emails too and this one was kind of fun!

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, December 17, 2010)

Max Lucado's book I finished last week on the legacy. It's an excellent book. It's called *Something About Life*. But the whole purpose of it is legacy. It's got the byword in it. And this one *Fear Not* was written just before this. That's the other one that he had.

(*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
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Joni Eareckson Tada has also written a brand new book. You know, she has cancer now and is in tremendous pain. And this new book is one of the healthiest presentations I've ever heard on healing. It is well, well done. It has the word healing in the title.

(*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.*" ...
pp. 16-17

Boy, you know when you hear stories like that and you realize the awesome witness that she's had, God has blessed her in that chair. And that God has a purpose and a plan for each of our lives. It's when we bow our necks and resist what He's trying to do and beg Him to relieve us of it, we do not know His full purpose in making us like His Son. And we need to be very, very sensitive to that.

(*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.

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And that's where Paul is today. He is so discouraged. This is the end of the teaching session.

You remember last week he addressed the whole subject of the "pretty bad attitude" with these people and the way they were acting and it had changed. Remember the question he asked? "Have I become your enemy because I've been telling you the truth?"

We talked about our own attitudes and relationships with each other. How quickly they change when we have disagreements or misunderstanding.

Today we're continuing along that same line. I have titled this study—since it's the conclusion of the doctrinal section:

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

"Whee! I Am Free" should be where we are. The other problem is, we're in bondage.

Satan does not sit idly by and let believers enjoy a free hand—nothing ever taking place. He constantly rises against it.

You will not believe this but last week I was sitting in my study in the bank with my notes for this particular lesson and a bat flew right into my face. I thought I was either in hell or something had happened or I was hallucinating. And that bat just flew around and around and around and around the room. I finally got up, found him down close to one of my bookcases. Then he got in behind the bookcase. And so, all day long, while my light was on, he was happily behind the bookcase. I had told the maintenance people that there was a bat in there and they looked at me kind of with chagrin.

Well just as I left to go home, I turned the lights out. And wouldn't you know that Genevieve and Haley, her daughter, saw the bat come right at them. And so they chased the maintenance man down and got him out there!

Isn't it weird how you get distracted with some of the dumbest stuff that happens to you, or that's said about you, or gets you off track. And you're not being useful to the Spirit because you still have those things in your mind. Well that's the way the devil works. He uses smoking. He uses drinking. He uses sex. He uses alcohol. The common denominator is tools of enslavement. He wants to destroy your life by getting you enslaved in any one of these tragic, tragic things.

And the older we get the more we find excuses for cooperating with Him. And God help us if we don't recognize who He is.

What He is doing in Galatian churches is really discouraging Paul because they have already bought into these false teachers. They are living by the Law, some of these. And so his final plea comes in this passage.

John 8:32

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free

I started singing with Fanny Crosby:

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

So once again we're going into a passage that is loaded with truth but it's loaded with controversy. So you've got to be ready for both of these today.

Now what you're going to have—just in order for us to get the picture—in the passage that we're looking at, you're going to have two covenants. You're going to have the Mosaic covenant and you're going to have the Abrahamic covenant.

You understand, the Mosaic covenant is different from the Abrahamic covenant in this sense—the Mosaic covenant is conditional. It is two people—Moses and the Lord together—and it's conditional on obedience. The blessing of the Mosaic covenant is conditioned on obedience and fulfilling the

requirements for the Law. So there's no blessing if you break it.

The Abrahamic covenant is different. Abrahamic covenant is unconditional. It is God alone walking between the pieces saying "I promise to do this." And there is no stipulation in that covenant.

So he's going to play the Abrahamic covenant against the Mosaic covenant. That's going to be part of your study today.

So as we get into the passage:

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

[Galatians] 5:1 is our key verse.

Now I've got to talk to you about one more thing. We're going to see what is called an allegory. This is the only place in the Bible where you have the word "allegory."

There are so many people who have gotten tripped up by this word allegory that they think that's the only way to interpret the Bible. Everything is an allegory. You don't have to prove its historicity. You don't have to show what it's saying literally.

The only reason Paul uses a literal story—now get this in your mind, we're going to look at the record (it's literal, it happened

for Abraham). Paul is going to take that literal happening and make an allegory out of it because the Judaizing teachers believe that the highest interpretation of the Law was an allegory.

So he's playing right into their court in what he has to say. Don't let that affect your feelings about the book of Revelation, about any other situation with regard to the scripture. The literal interpretation is always the safest and the only way to be.

When you have a parable, when you have a symbolism, a picture where it says "like" you can still interpret it literally.

Like I'm teaching the book of Revelation on Monday night. I've got the word "like, like, like."

"Like the face of a man."

"Like a calf."

"Like an eagle."

You take the literal interpretation of that passage and apply it to the passage.

So I'm just saying that because there are a lot of people who will turn to this passage and say "Well, Paul used an allegory, why can't I use an allegory and allegorize the life of Christ? Or other things in the scripture?" We can't.

You ready? Alright, let's get into it.

There are 3 commands in the passage. There's one right here in verse 21 and then there are going to be 2 commands in chapter 5, verse 1—our last verse. So we've got a command at the first.

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

“Tell me, [is the COMMAND] you who are desiring to be under law, are you not hearing the law?”

You folks that are there, don't you realize the Law is a total unit and you can't pick and choose what parts of it you're going to keep? And if you break any part of it, you've broken it all.

James 2:10

Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he's guilty of it all.

God doesn't grade on the curve. And so he starts right out with this:

“Tell me, you who are desiring to be under law, are you not hearing the law?”

Don't you understand the Law and the consequences of breaking it?

I think with the word "law", he's referring to all 5 books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—the Pentateuch. Sometimes he uses the word "law" to refer to all of it because it spells out all the 618 different regulations and laws that are a part of it.

So he's saying, let me give you an illustration of the consequences, of going back as a Christian to live under legalism.

Now he's getting ready to tell you. Here it comes, verse 22.

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

"For it has been written." Three times he's going to quote the Old Testament.

Here he's going to go right back to the record in Genesis 16. Then he's going to go to the book of Isaiah and then he's going to come back to Genesis when we wrap up this study.

So there are 3 times that he's going to use the Word of God.

"For it has been written [Genesis 16] that Abraham had two sons, one from the maidservant and one from the free woman."

Now, do you remember what happened? God made that promise to them. God alone walked between the pieces and said that you're going to have a land and you're going to have a seed, you're going to be the father of many nations.

When that promise was made, they handled that delay of that promise for 10 years. Then Sarah woke up one morning saying, "You know, we've got to understand I'm not getting any younger. And I think God really means for us to help Him in this. And the way we're going to do that, Abe, is that you're going to go in under the handmaid Hagar. She's an Egyptian handmaid and she's going to give birth to the child and that's going to be the covenant child."

And so Abraham goes along with it. They didn't bring the Lord into it. They simply assumed that God appreciates help. And so, Ishmael was born. Do you remember what happened when Ishmael was born? God pulls the curtain. For 13 years there's not one thing that's recorded in the scripture. It tells you when you do something in the flesh, you're out of fellowship. And the Spirit of God is not in control. And for those 13 years, it's just like one place he's 88 years old and the next place he's 100. It's just that there's a gap there between those two chapters, chapters 16 and 17.

Now, to give the rest of it to you, there are two covenants. There are two women—Sarah and Hagar. There are two sons—Ishmael and Isaac. There are two covenants, of course we've already mentioned that: the Mosaic and the Abrahamic.

There are two mountains—Mount Sinah and the mountain in Jerusalem. And there are going to be two cities—Jerusalem the city here and Jerusalem the city from above. There is the Law as opposed to the promise. Flesh as opposed to the Spirit. The application is if you want bondage under Law or freedom that is yours in Jesus Christ.

What is it that it's so hard for us to wait for God to do and we feel like we've got to help Him? You know, part of it I think is we appreciate having control. And our pride makes us that way. We just feel like if we don't get it done, it won't get done and we live by a lie from the devil. He's distracted us at that point.

Psalm 27:14

Wait on the Lord;
Be of good courage
And he shall strengthen thine heart.
Wait I say on the Lord.

Never, ever do you want to take the responsibility in your own hands.

I've heard so many people desperate because they have made the mistake of not being patient and waiting for the Lord.

Back a couple of weeks ago we had the privilege of having some dear friends come by to visit us at the office from Waco. I had ministered to Gary for probably 20 years through a lot of

crisis and circumstances in his life, his personal life and his business. So I was thrilled to see them. They were going to go and spend a year in Mozambique Africa as missionaries.

We were thrilled to death they were going. Well in the conversation we did not recognize the ministry they were going with. Diane said, "Oh the ministry that we're going with was established by Mrs. Charles Cowman." I said, "You mean the one who wrote *Streams in the Desert*?" She said yes.

Well Pearl immediately said, "You know what happened to me? We went to the doctor's book fair." Now if you've ever been to the doctor's book fair in Tyler, that's where you get books for 50 cents or a dollar. And Pearl always goes because she wants to see how many of my books are there. And then she always comes back and says "But look how many of Swindoll's books are there." It's a fun time.

She found an autographed copy of *Streams in the Desert* by Mrs. Cowman. And she had the thrill of sending that to them as kind of a get-away gift for them on their trip. Listen to this poem by her. I love this.

(*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)

That same principal, I would say, is violated in so many marriage relationships that we have the privilege of counseling.

As you know, that Pearl and I entered into this ministry with these couples. And invariably when you come and you get into the bottom line of it, especially if they're both Christians, is

they are just waiting for things to happen but they're not waiting.

It's like "he promised me he would change and he hasn't changed a bit." Or "she said this and she hasn't done that."

It's like putting a time bomb before you. It's putting a mandate. It's putting a date of when this has to happen. And in essence, that's where Sarah fell prey to the fact that she was unable to have a child so she assumed that this would be God's will for them to do that.

Now I'm going to go to Genesis 16 and just give you some record here of what actually took place.

As soon as Hagar got pregnant, there was a tremendous cleavage. And Genesis 16:11 says "Sarah deals severely with her and she fled." 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. That son was born and his name was Ishmael.

Now when Genesis 17 comes, at the 25 year mark, God shows up with two angelic messengers (as you'll remember they're on their way down to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah) and the Lord just said "along with them, this time next year Sarah is going to be holding a baby."

Well Sarah lost it in the tent. You know, just thinking that a 90 year old woman would be to have a child. And Abraham

being 100 would be involved in the whole situation. And it was more than she could handle. But sure enough, a year from then, a child was born. In Genesis 21 you've got the birth of Isaac.

Do you remember what the Lord said in Genesis 17 to Abram when Abram said, "You know, I'm so thankful that Ishmael is going to be the one." The Lord said "No. Sarah is going to bear you a son."

What a horrible, horrible feeling to realize that for 13 years I've been assuming that what I did in the flesh was appreciated by the Lord and therefore I ought to be entering into the blessing.

How many people at Holly Lake, let's just put it that way, are assuming that because of their good works, their church membership, the things they have done, that in their old age they can be very comfortable that when they get to glory they're going to roll out the red carpet and everything is going to be fine.

You know, when all else fails, read the instructions. And when our lives do not line up to what God blesses, then it's our responsibility to take action in those specific areas of our lives so that we are ready and prepared with peace in our hearts that we have prepared for eternity by our relationship with Him.

Now, Abraham had two sons. One from the maidservant, Hagar, and one from the free woman, Sarah. So God is at work in this situation even though they have botched it up.

Verse 23—are you getting excited? Oh this is going to get good before we get through. I hope you’re coming along with me here.

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.

“On the one hand, the son from the maidservant had been born after the flesh. [Now, land on that for just a second.] On the other hand, the son from the free woman had been born through the promise.”

What does it mean about Hagar and the flesh? Just that that’s the way a baby is born, according to the flesh. Abraham went into Hagar and a baby was born, named Ishmael, according to the flesh.

Now he’s going to take that term “flesh” and he’s going to use that against us when we get to the later part of chapter 5 because he’s going to talk about the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit so we can tell in our own lives whether we’re walking in the Spirit or we’re walking in the flesh.

But here it's just the normal, human way that a baby is born. That's the way Ishmael is born.

"On the other hand, the son from [Sarah] had been born through the promise."

God made a promise and therefore, in His time, in His way, He fulfilled that promise and that little baby was named Isaac.

He had been born according to the promise, or "through the promise."

How else could you translate that? It was all God's doing. They didn't have a thing to do with it.

Now, would you take that same principle and apply it to your salvation? Please?

It's by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast.

This is the hardest thing for people who've grown up in a performance orientation to accept that "Hey, I didn't have a thing to do with what God did in my life other than inviting Him to do it. And by faith I reached out to Him!" And what an illustration this is to these Judaizers and to the folks who are being subdued by them and distracted by adding the Law to their salvation experience.

Back in the early days of ministry when we were up at The Firs in Bellingham, Washington—I was a program director there for several years before we came down to Texas to help start Pine Cove—I had a glass on my desk. You know, that was the classy thing when you were back in the 50's and 60's to have a glass on your desk. And then you slide all the family pictures under it—the glass—and the things that were meaningful to you. There was one statement by F. B. Meyer that I slid under there and I've got to go back in all of those boxes in the storeroom and see if I can find that.

F. B. Meyers said:

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)

That's painful but it's true! And what comes when you get ready to make the decision and you make it?

Colossians 3—the peace of God acts as an umpire.

“The work of righteousness will be peace” (Isa. 32:17).

Isaiah 26:3: “Thou will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee.”

If you’ve got anxiety and worry, you better retreat and take another look at it before you come to that moment of peace.

The flesh is that old capacity for us to live life without God. And we’ll see that in the next one.

Now here comes the word “allegorical.” The only place it occurs, verse 24.

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

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

Now he doesn’t go ahead and finish it. He assumes that you can do it.

And the other is from Abraham by promise, which is Sarah. So he went on to give you the rest of it.

Now, to the Jews—the Judaizers, these teachers—they had 4 levels of interpretation whenever they interpreted the Law.

The first one would be the LITERAL and they didn't go there very often.

The second would be the SUGGESTED—what do you think it means?

The third would be EVOLVED FROM INVESTIGATION—you have really studied the Law, you've studied the language and this is the interpretation.

And then if you reach the epitome, you would have an ALLEGORICAL interpretation. You would take the story to mean this and that. No sense of literal.

Now, we're just the opposite aren't we? We come to the book knowing that it is verbally inerrant. It is a rule of faith and practice. It is authoritative. It is God's Word and when we open it, we take it literally. And if we don't understand it, we ask the Spirit of God to make it clear to us and we study and agonize over the text until it is clear what it is that is trying to be said in the passage.

So Paul just jumps right in there and he uses the very things that these Judaizing teachers were using.

There is “one from Mount Sinah”—that of course is the Law—“giving birth to bondage”—which is the Law of Moses. And that’s represented in Hagar.

The second one is the covenant of promise—the Abrahamic covenant—and the freedom that everything has been done. And what can I do to help? Not a thing! It’s all taken care of because of the promise.

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.

“Now this Hagar is Mount Sinah in Arabia,”—he’s putting it all together—“and is corresponding to the Jerusalem which now is, for she is in slavery with her children.”

You understand “the Jerusalem which now is” is the Jerusalem during the time of Christ. You’ve got the Pharisees and the Sadducees living by the Law and they persecuted Christ. They resisted the gospel in every way because they were in bondage to the Mosaic Law. The city of Jerusalem represented that.

I wrote down this statement:

The Law equals:

Performance,

Penalty, and

Prison

That's what the Law's for.

The Law equals:

PERFORMANCE—you've got to keep it in order to experience any fruit from it,

There's a PENALTY when you break it, and

There is PRISON or bondage that takes place when you have violated. Justice will be administered in this situation.

They are under bondage to the Law.

Now, when you get to verse 26, maybe you need a little Revelation teaching here and we'll jump to the book of Revelation for a second.

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

“But the Jerusalem which is above is free which is our mother.”

Of course, we know that's Sarah because of the Abrahamic covenant.

“The Jerusalem which is above” is the Jerusalem where all the saints are going to be living until the time when Christ comes back to set-up his kingdom. The Jerusalem in heaven will descend to the earth and will be our abode.

You want to listen to the verses?

Revelation 21:1-4

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 ... [and so on and so forth].

Now, Hebrews 11:16 says the same thing.

Hebrews 11:16

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 it for them.

“The Jerusalem which is above is free which is our mother [Sarah].”

Literally we go—when we’re absent from the body, present with the Lord—this will be our dwelling place. For all eternity we are there with the Lord.

Now, notice what verse 27 says. He is going to quote from the book of Isaiah—I think it’s Isaiah 54:1—in verse 27.

He quoted from Genesis 16 as we opened it. Now here in the middle he’s going to quote from Isaiah and then he’s going to go back to Genesis to wrap it up.

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.

“For it has been written; Rejoice barren woman”—who’s that? Sarah can’t have a baby—“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.”

God’s plan is going to be the fulfillment of a promise and there are going to be more kids from that than any progeny that would come from keeping of the Law.

Has anybody kept the Law? This is it. There is no fruit.

But I'm telling you, those by faith who have come to know Jesus Christ as Savior, look at the massive, massive promises of the Abrahamic covenant. Like the sands of the seashore and the stars in the sky. Just to realize how God has been so faithful in the keeping of His promise. And he brings the book of Isaiah in there. That's one of the Judaizers favorite prophets too, by the way, so he's really coming down hard on the whole thing.

“Break forth and cry you who are not experiencing the pains of birth, because more are the children of the desolate”—that's God's miraculous power at work—“than the one who is having a husband.”

That's the “exceeding abundant above all that we can ask or think” of Ephesians 3:20.

Gary Thomas has written the greatest book on marriage. If you're married and you want to read a good book of marriage, *Pure Pleasure* is the name of this book by Gary Thomas. He's written also *Sacred Honor* and two or three others. But I'm quoting from him in this one.

I love what he says here about the relationship between husband and wife and the relationship to the study.

(Pure Pleasure: Why Do Christians Feel So Bad About Feeling Good? by Gary Thomas)

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)

Strong, strong statement.

But isn’t it amazing the transformation that takes place when you begin to live in each other’s lives and you become a blessing and a joy to each other because you’re aware of things and what can be done to make it such a special, special time.

Mary Beth Chapman in *Choosing to See*, the little book that I’ve been quoting:

(Choosing to See: A Journey of Struggle and Hope by Mary Beth Chapman with Ellen Vaughn)

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)

I wish Sarah and Abraham would have been willing to endure the pain for another 15 years so that we wouldn't have to deal with the whole era of problem that we're dealing with today and all the consequences that are still among us because of that act of the flesh.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon said:

(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)

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)

That's the attitude that he says he has for the scripture.

Are you ready for the big one? Here it comes! It's going to get strong! It's going to get prickly before we're through.

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

“Now you, brethren—and sisters—(are) after the manner of Isaac. You (are) children of promise.”

Now we've made the choice. The declaration is made clear. And we understand that the Law is now history in our lives because we have become Christians, we have a brand new life in Jesus Christ, we've been born again by the Spirit.

Spurgeon, when he's lecturing his students says:

(Lectures to My Students by C. H. Spurgeon)

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)

Oswald Chambers said:

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers)

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)

What a wonderful, wonderful truth.

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.

“But just as then, [verse 29] he who was born according to the flesh was persecuting him who was born according to the Spirit, so also now.”

You remember what happened? Ishmael’s about 17 and it’s time to wean Isaac and they have this big celebration. Sarah looks out and sees Ishmael mocking Isaac and making fun of him.

Well, that will flat get a woman pretty excited. And basically she comes down with the gauntlet that you’ll see in just a moment.

But Paul is saying, just as it was then, so it is now.

Who were the ones that persecuted Jesus the most? The LEGALISTS—the Scribes and the Pharisees—the ones keeping the Mosaic Law.

He's saying "just as it is now."

Does he have a right to speak, mind you? What are his credentials for us today?

He was the chief persecutor. He was on his way to Damascus before he met the living Christ. He was the one everybody was afraid of. He's the one they laid their coats—the Sanhedrin—when they stoned Stephen to death (the first martyr) after that powerful message that he gave.

And so, yes, he understands what legalists are about and how they feel about the promises which God gives to us.

Are you ready? Here it comes. This is strong. Verse 30:

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.

"But what is the scripture saying?—[this is Genesis 16]—
"Throw out the maidservant and her son. For the son of the maidservant shall by no means [absolutely, positively, no way] inherit with the son of the free woman."

Now we understood that because we're sons and daughters in the family—we had that about 3 weeks ago. Do you remember that?—because we're sons and daughters we have an inheritance.

Now Sarah makes it quite clear. Nobody who keeps the Law is going to experience anything of the inheritance.

Throw her out and her son: “For the son of the maidservant shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.”

“Shall by no means”—absolutely, positively, in no way.

It's like trying to mix water and oil. You just can't put it together.

Dan Green said:

(Finish Strong: Amazing Stories of Courage and Inspiration by Dan Green)

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)

And God uses us in special ways and it thrills our hearts when we know and sense that He is using us in the lives of others.

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

“Therefore,”—do you want the summary?—“brethren we are not children of the maidservant but of the free woman.”

Verse 31.

Now you understand Paul's whole argument as he concludes the doctrinal section. He's making it quite clear who we are.

Why?

Reason, chapter 5 verse 1—our key verse:

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.

“For this freedom Christ set us free.”

Now TWO COMMANDS:

1. “Keep on standing firm therefore”
2. “and stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.”

“Tell me” was the first command back in verse 21.

Now here in chapter 5 verse 1 you've got the other two:

“keep on standing firm therefore.”

These are present tense commands. They go on every day. And then when it's negative present command, it's happening and you're told to stop it.

Remember what Jesus said to the disciples in the upper room?

“Stop being troubled in your hearts.”

Present Negative—because they were troubled in their hearts about Him saying that He was going to be leaving them and die.

“Stop becoming entangled again in a yoke of bondage.”

Isn't that a great way to end the doctrinal section? To just come across with something so plain and so powerful.

“Keep on standing firm”

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

And stop being held in bondage because it's for this freedom that Christ has set us free.

Well you have the epitome of the whole letter. A lot of commentators use this chapter 5 verse 1 as their key verse. And you know that I drop down to chapter 5 and verse 7, which we'll have next week in our study. And using that as the means of teaching the passage.

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

How do you do that? Well I put down:

Matthew 11:28-30

Come unto me all ye who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, [if you want a yoke] and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart. And you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.

God is still in the wonderful process of saving lives but also working dramatically in our own lives.

Listen to Drew Brees as you get to the end of his book:

(Coming Back Stronger: Unleashing the Hidden Power of Adversity by Drew Brees with Chris Fabry)

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. ...(pp. 89-90)

What a testimony to us who so often want to be freed from the process that the Lord has in making us like His Son.

Oswald Chambers:

(My Utmost For His Highest by Oswald Chambers)

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)

Twelve lessons that come out of it. Now you take time today when you get home to look at those lessons and let the Lord speak to you.

I'm going to conclude this study tonight a little different, ok.

This email came to me several weeks ago. And I was so touched by it because this is something that you can only explain as a God thing. And maybe your testimony, if you gave it today, of receiving of Christ is a God thing. You know it. You are children of the promise.

This is called:

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, December 17, 2010)

Father, thank You for this reminder tonight of how You orchestrate so many special things that we know are “God things” in our lives. It just makes us aware and more peaceful and confident that You knew what You were doing when You satisfied all the demands of the law in sending Your precious Son to give His life on Calvary. Father, thank You that each of us can think here tonight of times when we have made that decision to receive Christ. Father, per chance there’s been confusion and there’s someone here tonight who doesn’t know You as Savior, that Your Spirit would speak to their hearts and they’d make that glorious discovery and decision because of this clear teaching of the passage that is so obviously a choice that we each must make. Dismiss us now with Your blessing we pray. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

STUDY NUMBER NINE – UNTIL: “WHEE! I AM FREE” BECAME, “BOY! I AM IN BONDAGE” – GALATIANS 4:21-5:1

KEY VERSE 5:1

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.

NOTES

QUESTIONS:

1. Read Galatians 4:21-5:1 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. What two sons of Abraham is Paul talking about here? (Consult Genesis 16 & 21)

3. Which son represents the law, and which son represents the promise, according to verse 23?

4. Why does Paul mention Mount Sinai and Jerusalem in verse 25?

5. How are the Christians in Galatia identified in verse 28?

6. What is the attitude of those “born according to the flesh” towards those “born according to the Spirit” in verse 29?

7. What command is given in verse 30?

8. What command is given to the Galatian Christians in chapter 5:1?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

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).