

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com www.lightfordarktimes.com

Breathing the Fresh Air of Liberty in Jesus Christ

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

“Sons, Not Slaves”

December 1, 2013

Sermon Text: Galatians 4:1-7

Scripture Reading: Romans 4

Introduction-

The message of Galatians is life and death – eternally. There is nothing more important for you at this present moment that that you understand and believe the message of this letter. Nothing. Because in the end, at the end of your life – the gospel is that oil in your lamp, that precious pearl we

must give all diligence to possess. Nothing else matters now. Nothing else will matter then. The rich farmer that Jesus told us about back in Luke’s gospel was a fool. He focused on his barns and his farm and boasted about himself and what he owned. But that very night, would he not have given it all and more to have the message of Paul’s letter to the Galatians?

Let me once again walk you through the first three chapters. This evening we will read some more from Martin Luther’s classic commentary on Galatians, and have still more opportunity to know it and understand it – and believe it.

Review of Chapters 1-3

Paul hit the ground running as he greeted the Galatians. *Paul, an apostle – not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father....* He will elaborate on this point beginning in 1:11 and clear down through really the end of chapter 2.

Paul was called as an Apostle by Jesus Christ Himself. His office is of

divine origin directly. He wasn't ordained by some group down in Jerusalem or anywhere else.

His message is that Christ has given Himself for our sins and delivers us from this present evil age. This world is not a good place. It is fallen and it is under the curse. We need rescue from it.

Then he tells them he is just totally blown away that they have so *quickly* deserted the Lord and started running after "another gospel." It is a lie. There is no other good news. What is happening is that wicked men had come into their churches stirring up all this doubt and trouble by distorting the truth Paul had preached.

NOTE: We must always be on guard for these kinds of "troublers." The same thing happens today. For selfish purposes of gaining their own following and seeking their own glory, legalists sneak into the church disguised as sheep, but their purpose is to enslave. Any person who adheres to the Law and works to get people to follow after them is just this kind of person. Inevitably here will come the list of "do's and don'ts." "Oh, here is what you must do." And the purpose you see is that if they can get us to buy into their Law/works righteousness system, we will become enslaved to the "lawgiver," looking to them for

approval. One of the chief indicators of such a person is that you begin to wonder all the time "what will they say about this; will they approve of me or not." Beware. Paul says in verse 10 that we must never be lured into men-pleasing. (Also see 2:4-5)

Such false teachers and their message are cursed by God doubly – anathema!

And then Paul gives some personal biography starting at verse 11, and he does so to prove this point:

Galatians 1:11-12 For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. (12) For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Right in the midst of his ranting against the church and his up and coming career in Judaism, God stopped him right in his tracks and revealed Christ to him. How else can the great change in Saul of Tarsus be explained?

So Paul actually then separated himself. He didn't go to any person in the church and ask them to teach him. No, he steered clear of Jerusalem and went into Arabia, then back to Damascus. He stayed put there for 3 years and only then did he go to

Jerusalem where the other apostles were, and then only for a brief time and he only saw Peter and James. Then he was off again to Syria and Cilicia.

He didn't mix it up with the churches in Judea and they would not even have recognized him if they saw him. His gospel was from Christ alone.

After 14 long years, he went to Jerusalem again, but it was not to receive teaching from them. While there, he did not yield to Jewish legalists at all. They all found out that the gospel Paul preached was the same gospel they preached. They welcomed him.

Now, not only did Paul's office and gospel not come from any man, but in 2:11 Paul explains how HE corrected one of the "pillars" of the Jerusalem church – Peter. There was that whole hypocritical business at Antioch and Paul tool Peter on for his practical denial of the gospel which is through Promise, not through the Law. We live by FAITH in Christ, not by the law.

Then at chapter 3 Paul returns to his admonishment: "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you?" He reminds them how clearly he had presented Christ to them and then asks them that series of rhetorical questions. "Did you receive the Spirit by works of the

law or by hearing with faith?" They knew the answer.

And then at 3:6 Paul mentions the example of Abraham, the first Jew, and here we have a wonderful digest of the history of God's redemption in Jesus Christ. It is not an exaggeration to say that if you will get hold of 3:6 – 4:7 you will have a grasp of the main theme of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. *Largely, Paul's argument comes from the OT Scripture – from the Law – itself.*

- God saves us by faith alone in Christ alone. It has always been so.
- Abraham believed God (Gen 15:6) and it was counted to him as righteousness. BEFORE he was even circumcised.
- The blessing promised to Abraham, that all the nations of the earth would be blessed in him, is the gospel!
- The way to become a son of Abraham then is by faith in the Promise of God.
- YOU must become a son of Abraham if you are going to be saved.

Now, in contrast, consider the way of works and the Law –

- All who relate to God by works, by the law, are *cursed*. The Law

itself says so – you are cursed unless you do ALL of the Law perfectly.

- The law itself says “the righteous shall live by faith,” but the law itself is of works, not faith. Righteousness comes by faith in God’s Promise, not by *doing*.
- Therefore, Christ came! He took the law’s curse of us upon Himself. The Law said He would! “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree.”
- Once the curse was gone, once our debt to the Law was paid, we can receive the Spirit by faith alone.

Now, some more explanation about the purpose of the Law, and the nature of the Promise:

- God, who cannot lie, made a promise to Abraham. That Promise was also made to the Seed of Abraham, Christ.
- Therefore, all who are in Christ (vs 29) are also heirs of that same Promise.
- Why did God give the Law then 430 years after the Promise? It was NOT because God was voiding the Promise and bringing in some new way of righteousness by works. No!
- The Law was given because of sin. That is its sole purpose. To restrain sin. To expose sin. And

even to excite sin so that it is more readily seen. The Law’s business is to kill self-righteousness and to condemn sinners.

- The Law continues to serve in this capacity, defining a person’s relationship with God, until that person comes to faith.
- Moses was the mediator of the Law. He interceded between God and man. But in the Promise, God is ONE. God is the only mediator you might say because according to His Promise, GOD alone acts and fulfills and redeems.
- So the Law is not some alternate, opposite way of salvation to the Promise. No. The Law *imprisons everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*
- The Law was like a guardian and we under it were like children not come of age. We had to be whacked when we stepped out of line, but when we came to faith, we were like children come of age, come into our inheritance by Promise.
- Therefore, here is the sum of the whole thing:

Galatians 3:26-29 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (27) For as many of

you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

So all of the Old Testament account of the earthly nation of Israel, physical circumcision, the sacrifices, the promised land – were all pictures: types and shadows of the real Israel and the real promised land, the New Creation.

Romans 2:28-29 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. (29) But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Sons and Heirs, Not Minor Children

Listen now as I read 4:1-7. It begins with a very similar illustration to what Paul has already said earlier (3:23-25) with just a bit of a change in the picture:

Galatians 4:1-7 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is

the owner of everything, (2) but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. (3) In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. (4) But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, (5) to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. (6) And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (7) So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

We obtain the blessing promised to Abraham by faith, and this blessing which is ours (forgiveness of sins, eternal life, resurrection, the new heavens and earth...) comes to us by way of *inheritance*. Because we are sons of God in Christ, we are heirs of all that the Father has given the Son.

Now, what Paul wants to emphasize here once again is that *sons do not go back to their earlier status as children*. In a household (at least in Paul's day) the son of the father was put under the care of a trusted slave. The son, though a son, was no different than a slave while he remained in his minority

(childhood). But when the day came that this child “came of age” and thus possessed legal right to his inheritance, he received it and he was no longer regarded as a child with no rights. You don’t say to a 5 year old – “here are the keys to your car. Drive it anywhere you want.” No, he isn’t of age.

And this, Paul says, is how it was in God’s plan in the era of the Law. The Law reigned until the “fullness of time” came (which was determined by the Father) and the Law’s demands were dealt with by Christ so that we could be adopted as sons of God.

Let’s consider a few of the phrases that Paul uses here.

1. Vs 3 – the “elementary principles of the world.”

Before we came to faith in Christ, we were enslaved to what Paul calls these “elementary principles of the world.”

He refers to the same thing in 4:8-10 -

Galatians 4:8-10 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. (9) But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and

worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? (10) You observe days and months and seasons and years!

Let’s see if we can get hold of what this phrase means.

The “elementary principles of the world” is a phrase that includes the Mosaic Law, but is broader in meaning yet. If you compare 3:23 with 4:2-3 we see plainly that the term does indeed include the Law. But remember that these Galatians were not all Jews. Gentiles were among them as well. So in what sense had these Gentiles been under slavery to the Law? The answer is that there is a fundamental identity between the false gospel the Jewish false teachers were bringing to them and the pagan religion they used to pursue and were enslaved to.

“Elementary principles” means something like the “basic building blocks of some system.” In this case, of the world. The ABC’s you might say of the cosmos. Just as individual letters are put together to form words, and then those words are joined to form sentences, so the universe has its ABC’s. The Greeks believed that the basic elements of the universe were earth, air, fire, and water. Pagans deified these elements, and others

deified the Sun and the planets, the moon and fixed stars. F.F. Bruce says:

In what sense could it be said that the Galatian Christians in their pagan days were under the same ABC's as had controlled Paul and his fellow-Jews? For the present stage of Paul's argument it suffices to observe that the law ranks as one of the ABC's.

The ABC's (stoicheia), it is now made plain, not only regulated the Jewish way of life under law; they also regulated the pagan way of life in the service of gods that were no gods. To be enslaved to such counterfeit deities was to be enslaved to the stoicheia, and the Galatians would be enslaved to the stoicheia all over again if they `reverted' not to their former paganism but to Jewish religious practices. That, as Paul saw it, his Gentile readers were tending to revert to a form of religion which they had practiced before their conversion to Christianity is emphasized by his repeated "again" and "once more" in vs 9.

For all the basic differences between Judaism and paganism, both involved subjection to the same elemental forces. This is an astonishing statement for a former Pharisee to make; yet Paul makes it-not as an exaggeration in the heat of argument but as the deliberate expression of a carefully thought out position.

It is most probable that the Galatians' observance of the cultic calendar (v 10) is adduced as evidence of reversion to the service of the stoicheia. The stoicheia, therefore, include the forces by which the calendar is regulated, and since the calendrical divisions are for the most part controlled by the movements of the planets, the planets may well be included among the stoicheia. Pagans had their sacred calendars, as the Jews had theirs, although they tended to ascribe divinity to the planets as the Jews did not. Paul is not thinking of any conscious reversion to planet-worship on the Galatians' part; he means that by treating the sacred calendar as a matter of religious obligation they are in effect putting themselves in bondage to the forces that control the calendar.

From the context it may be gathered that the stoicheia 'cover all the things in which man places his trust apart from the living God; they become his gods, and he becomes their slave'

F. F. Bruce. The Epistle to the Galatians (New International Greek Testament Com (Eerdmans)) (Kindle Locations 3643-3644). Kindle Edition.

In other words, works-righteousness is idolatry and it is the religion of man. It is ingrained in the mind and character

of fallen human beings. So much so, that the gospel of The Promise in which the blessing is obtained freely, by faith alone – is foolishness to the human mindset.

1 Corinthians 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Here is the very same thing and warning Paul gives to the Colossians:

Colossians 2:6-8 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, (7) rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. (8) See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

What is Worldliness?

So *worldliness*? What is worldliness? Is it going to see a movie or drinking a beer or dressing in a particular way? Well, worldliness is a worldly mindset and it is more fundamental than these outward things – though, yes, it may be evidenced in some cases by those

kinds of outward acts. But in its essence,

Worldliness is the philosophy that worships a false god who can be appeased by man's own works. Therefore, the most outwardly "religious" person, such as the Pharisee, is the most worldly person to be found. The very ones who decry others for being "worldly" turn out to be the most worldly!

Application

How many professing Christians then, and how many local churches have been caught up in the Galatian error and are, in fact practicing the religion of the world?

I challenge all of us to take a long and honest look at ourselves. Are you a son or a slave? Are you under the Law or in the Promise by faith? Why are you here? Why do you profess to be a Christian? Is it because of this:

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Or is it because of you and your own doings and your own "code" of rules that you impress upon others that you

fancy yourself right with God? There are oh sooooo many of these kinds in our churches – they are the same brand that came and distorted the gospel and troubled the Galatians, and their goal is their own self glory.

Listen to this description someone shared with me this last week about how she experienced this very thing in the church she grew up in –

They said the right things, they dressed the right way. They were elders. They were church founders. They were so kind, so generous, so holy. But it was all a facade - a very cleverly, crafted facade. It took decades, and three church splits, before it got all sorted out in that church.

The question really comes down to this: *do you LOVE God, and do you LOVE His people?* This would be one of the marks of a false teacher and wolf. Somehow you know that they don't really love you, and it is because they don't love God. For all of their talk about Bible verses, and doctrinal matters, for all of their zealous service "for the Lord," they do it all under the law, working to make themselves righteous with God, and they want to bring all of us into the same bondage

they are in. They can't stand the freedom of the gospel.

And they know nothing of this Spirit of adoption that enables them to love God as their father – as their dad.

Romans 8:15-17 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (16) The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (17) and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Abba, Father and the Spirit of Adoption

By faith alone, because of Christ alone, we have been brought into the full status of sons of God, and because we are sons, we are heirs of all He has promised. The Spirit who now resides within us is the Spirit of Christ His Son who witnesses to us that we now stand in the love of the Father, having passed out of the realm of condemnation under the Law. You see this here in the phrase "Abba, Father."

Notice in verses 5-7 how many references there are to "sons" and

“adoption.” In fact, the Holy Spirit sent by the Father into our hearts enables us to cry out from our very hearts with this affectionate, loving title of God.

So when someone comes along, singing this tune and inviting you to come and join them -

*Give me that old time religion
'Tis the old time religion,
'Tis the old time religion,
And it's good enough for me.*

....we had better be quite careful to ask “just what is this old time religion you are talking about?” Because more often than not it is a false gospel of man’s tradition and works. It is idolatry and worldliness and enslavement.

“No thank you. In the fullness of time God already sent forth His Son who was born to represent me. He was born under the Law so that He could perfectly fulfill that Law’s demands upon me for perfect obedience and for my death for my sin. Your old time religion is called idolatry. It is the elementary principles of this fallen world, and I will have none of it.”