

**GETTING THE GOSPEL RIGHT (GTGR) (GAL 4:8-11)**

The historical backdrop of the book of Galatians is a setting much like our own today. Those considered to be the “pillars” of the Christian Faith were getting the gospel wrong (2:9-11). The outdated methods of justification (i.e. the OC clean laws of circumcision, animal sacrifices, Sabbaths and ritual separation) were being touted as back in force. Paul however would have no part in it. And that because he knew that the cutting off of old foreskins would also mean cutting off their relationship with Jesus and the justification offered through faith in Him (5:3-4). As such Paul goes on the offensive in this letter. He publicly attacks this “works of the law” addition to the gospel, as well as those promoting it (1:8-9, 2:11, 5:12). But it doesn’t stop there. Like all heresy, once ingested, its poison quickly spreads into other areas or facets of the Christian Faith (2Ti 2:17) – which in turn, also need to be remedied if the gospel is to be preserved. Paul’s mission in this letter is therefore much bigger than just righting the wrongs surrounding justification. It is about making sure that the Galatians were getting the gospel right at every level; that all aspects of their thinking that had been corrupted by this false gospel message were replaced by sound doctrine. In this respect, Paul provides the Galatians (and us) with a compendium of surgically precise, super effective biblical truths whose central focus and purpose is this very thing: getting the gospel right. Chapter 4, verses 8 through 11 provides number 13...

13. GTGR requires leaving behind any and all lifestyles incompatible with our new life with Christ (4:8-11).

Two are the focus of Paul’s teaching in these verses:

13.1. The satanic realm (8).

“Formerly, when you (Gentile Christians in Galatia) **did not know God were enslaved** (ἐδουλεύσατε = in bondage) **to those who by nature are not gods**” = demons or the satanic realm – the consistent position of the NT regarding those outside of a saving relationship w/Christ 1Co 8:5 w/10:20; Eph 2:1-3; 2Ti 2:24-26; 1Jo 5:19).”

As such...there are three things Paul implies:

13.1.1. (This former lifestyle is now) incompatible with new life in Christ.

Becoming a Christian (i.e. entering into a saving relationship with Christ/God) requires that He become our only Master/Lord and we His slave only. IOW: We must become “enslaved” to Him alone (Mat 6:24; Rom 10:9; 1Co 6:20; 2Co 6:15a; 1Co 10:21; Eph 4:4-5). This is why (then) we have stern warnings to avoid/fight against those who teach Christ’s Mastery/Lordship as unnecessary (Jud 3-4; 2Pe 2:1). Likewise, Jesus must also possess our greatest affections (Luk 14:25-35).

13.1.2. There are certain behaviors/habits/activities associated with the satanic realm that we must be free of (i.e. no longer practicing) because they too are incompatible with new life in Christ.

This is ultimately how we show our allegiance to someone (by actions associated with/for them – e.g. Joh 14:15).

IOW: ACTIONS INDICATE ASSOCIATION!

How we recognize behaviors/habits/activities associated w/the satanic realm:

13.1.2.1. It is something the Bible directly identifies as sin (since sin is associated w/Satan).

(Mat 7:15-27; Luk 13:22-27; Joh 8:44; 1Jo 2:28-3:10).

13.1.2.2. It is something the Bible sees as good - yet it is keeping us from faithfully serving our new Master, Christ.

“When good things become the ultimate things, then the good things become god (and the sin of idolatry).”

This is at the very core of Satan’s agenda! We don’t have to be doing something that is sin (in and of itself) to be serving the Evil One, all that is necessary is to be doing something (good or bad) that keeps us from our priority as Christians to faithfully serve Christ in those ways He has commanded (Col 3:17).

This (by the way) is what John is referring to when he warns against loving this world – or the things of this world (1Jo 2:15-17).

*How this is not a violation of the doctrine of Abundant Life = the key to AL is LBS! IOW: only when we (first) make Jesus our priority (first love) do we experience the blessings of not only this world-but the world to come. **How “loving the things of this world” creates/leads to other perversions (or direct sin) = Essentially, this (i.e. the good things becoming the ultimate things) is the reason behind every sin. It means that we will pursue them even when the context for possessing them is wrong (e.g. sex outside marriage, wealth outside of diligent, respectable work, possessions without responsibility, truth outside reality -?).

13.1.3. Our new life in Christ liberates us from satanic/sinful bondage and gives us the power to remain free (Joh 8:31-36; Luk 4:18; Rom 6:1-7; Tit 2:11-12; 2Pe 1:3-4 – notice that possessing God’s “divine power” is the key to the “promise of “becoming partakers of the divine nature” and escaping “the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire”).

13.2. Immaturity ((9-10)).

These verses make it clear that the reason Paul brings up the Galatians' prior bondage to the world and Satan is so that he can connect it to the Galatians' current consideration of the OC clean laws (3:1).

(10) "you observe days and months and seasons and years" = The Jewish Sabbaths and Sabbatical holidays [e.g. The month of Passover, The year of Jubilee]. As discussed before, the Galatians were not only being pressured and persuaded about circumcision, but all the OC clean laws. All of them would need to be observed if they were to be upheld - including those related to the Sabbath (Gal 5:3). This is consistent with what the rest of Scripture teaches regarding the Law in general (Deu 12:32, Mat 5:17-18; Luk 12:17; Jam 2:8-11).

In re: to the OC clean laws: though they were given by God as a means of justification (and therefore not a part of the satanic realm; Rom 7:12), they did have something in common with the satanic realm. Both are forms of bondage.

(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?" = Just as the observance of such clean laws "enslaved" the Jews under the OC (see v3), so it would do the same to the Gentile Christians in Galatia. Two things to consider:

13.2.1. Paul's use of slavery (here) – as well as throughout his discourse in chapter 4, carries the idea of a heavy burden. It is the picture of slavery under a tough system and a difficult taskmaster (hence why Jesus says what he does in Mat 11:28-30 – and also Peter in Act 15:10)

13.2.2. How these verses relate immaturity and why it is also incompatible w/our new life in Christ = As discovered in our prior discussion of verse 3, by calling the OC clean laws the "(weak and worthless) elementary principles of this world", Paul is inferring a level of a great spiritual immaturity since that is what the one word which makes up this phrase ("elementary principles of the world") refers to:

(στοιχεῖα) = the principles/elements of learning taught to the immature, the basics of life taught to babies (i.e. the ABC's and 123's). This again is how Paul viewed the OC clean laws - hence why Paul calls Jews under the OC "babies" in v1("child" [νήπιος]= lit. baby, or figuratively, one who is very immature – Rom 2:20; 1Co 3:1). This is how Paul also refers to the OC clean laws in (Col 2:1-23) and why he can say they have no power over fleshly indulgence (b/c they can't remove sin or free us from its bondage –only faith in Christ can do that- Rom 7:14-25). Finally, this is how the writer of Hebrews uses these words in (Heb 5:12-14 - again, στοιχεῖα and νήπιος). Paul is now implying the same thing about the Galatian Gentile Christians (i.e. they were acting like immature babies). Their desire to "turn back" to the "baby toys of justification" (i.e. the OC clean laws) no doubt fueled by another very immature thing – their man-crush on Peter (1:8-10), was going to put them into the same bondage situation as the Jews under the OC: no freedom to enjoy the promises and blessings of God's family inheritance (since such privileges are not afforded to babies!). This is true however as it relates to all forms of spiritual immaturity since God commands that we grow up in our Christian Faith (i.e. though we start as babies we must not remain babies – 1Pe 2:2 – Notice what causes us to "grow up" Notice also, it is a command! Consider also 2Pe 1:5-11). This too then (immaturity) is incompatible with our new life in Christ and therefore must be conquered in our lives –IOW: WE MUST GROW UP! It's not okay to keep struggling w/ the same immature problems you possessed when you first came into the faith.

Examples of spiritual immaturity = not knowing your Bible (Heb 5:12-13), not knowing the gospel or what a person must do to be saved (Heb 6:1), failing to settle down, get equipped and serve others in the Body in a significant way (Eph 4:8-16), illogical/irrational/ "ghetto" thinking (1Co 13:11, 14:20), no self control - living by your emotions (2Pe 2:18; Tit 2:2, 6, 11-12; 1Pe 1:13, 5:8; Act 24:25), fickle versus faithful in re: to those responsibilities God has given to them: as a student, as a parent, as a spouse, as it relates to your finances or your employment or church attendance or being on time (1Ti 3:8-13).

Conclusion: ((11)) = the result of going back into bondage to those things associated with the satanic realm and immaturity: loss of your saving relationship with Christ (i.e. loss of justification).

This verse represents yet another in the text of Scripture teaching this clear and common truth (e.g. Gal 5:4; 2Pe 2:20-22; Rom 11:20-22). Consider: **IF** these are genuine (justified) Christians that Paul is addressing (which it is – recall v9: "But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God" – how could that phrase mean anything but that they were in a saving/justified state w/God?!), **THEN** Paul's concerned statement, "**I am afraid that I may have labored over you in vain** (εἰκῆ = to no effect or purpose – Rom 13:4; 1Co 15:2)" **is limited to that singular conclusion** – the loss of what they once gained (justification) due to the fact that it was not maintained (in this case, the maintaining of a life free from the bondage of the satanic realm and of spiritual immaturity).

Why continuing in immaturity will lead to loss of justification? = b/c it will eventually lead us back to the satanic realm (2Pe 2:2, 20).