

## Sermon Discussion

### 5 June 2022

Read Galatians 4:8-31

#### Dig Deeper

Prior to conversion, the Galatians were **enslaved** to false gods such as Zeus and Hermes (*see Acts 14:11-13*). But they **came to know God** (salvation from the perspective of man), or **to be known by God** (salvation from God's perspective). Yet having come to know ("*gnontes*," literally "*to know intimately and on a personal level*") the true God, the Galatians were turning back. Paul was amazed and dismayed.

Under the influence of false teachers, the Galatians had begun to observe the Mosaic calendar. They kept special **days** (weekly sabbaths), and **months** (new moons), and **seasons** (seasonal festivals such as Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), and **years** (sabbatical and jubilee years). They observed these thinking that they would gain additional merit before God. But Paul had already made it clear that works could not be added to faith as grounds for either justification or sanctification.

Paul had become as his readers were (v. 12) in the sense that he had lived among them as a Gentile, not under the Mosaic Law. He now called on them to live independent of the Law as he did. Apparently, Paul observed the Jewish feasts after his conversion, but he did so voluntarily. He did not observe them because God expected him to do so but because they were a part of his cultural heritage.

The Galatians had appreciated Paul so much that they **received him as an angel** (v. 14). But now they were regarding him as an enemy. The false teachers were seeking to shut the Galatians out of the sphere of Paul's influence so his readers would be dependent on them. Paul sought his readers for the right reason, namely, their need to grow in grace.

The expression "**my little children**" (v. 19) occurs only here in Paul's writings. Only here in Galatians does he appear in the role of a mother, a mother who willingly undergoes the ordeal of pregnancy and delivery all over again in order to secure the well-being of her children.

In v. 21-31, Paul interpreted the history of Abraham's two sons **allegorically** to convince his readers that they were in danger of joining the wrong branch of Abraham's family... one being a **free** child of God and the other being a **slave** to the law, sin, and false gods. The background to this passage is *Genesis 16-17; 21*. Ishmael (technically the firstborn) represents the slave sons of Abraham because he was a son through the slave woman Hagar. Isaac, on the other hand, represents the free sons of Abraham.

1. In what sense does the gospel bring freedom? What does it mean to not be enslaved to religion?
2. What do you think it means to be "known by God" (v. 9)? Why is this an amazing thing to say?

3. If God still expects His people to obey, how is a relationship with Him different from being a slave to religion?
4. Why does the truth of the gospel often meet opposition from those who claim to be “religious”?

### **Application & Prayer**

Have you ever become someone’s enemy by telling the truth (4:16)? Do you need to speak the truth in love to someone right now? If so, explain why.

In verse 19, we see Paul’s passion for the spiritual growth of the Galatians. In what ways can you foster that kind of love for fellow believers?