

Chapter 15

CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. 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. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (Galatians 4:19-5:1)

When we consider all that Paul wrote to the Galatians to this point, it is not strange he had some serious doubts whether they were truly saved. These doubts were born of their involvement with the Judaizers' *other gospel*. In Paul's experience, or in ours, when those who profess faith in our Lord Jesus Christ lean to ritual and law for salvation, which by Paul's definition constitutes

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another gospel, this raises some serious doubts whether they have truly been *born from above* and are *a new creation in Christ Jesus*.

Despite Paul's doubts, he knew the Galatians had actually been saved. Yet as we near the end of the church age and the days of the great apostasy, more and more doubts are raised concerning professing Christians. This is true because many churches have become social organizations, where the fundamental truths of the Scriptures have been minimized to attract large memberships. In many of these churches the gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ has fallen to *a way which seemeth right unto a man*. Lip service is often given to faith in Christ, but the primary emphasis is upon Christian living and an ecumenical spirit, to the neglect of *the doctrine of Christ*.

This unity, for unity's sake, results in cooperation among most of the churches of a city to the betterment of the city. The various pastors throughout the city are called together to pray together and to cooperate together. Doctrine, of necessity, is excluded to maintain unity. From time to time these churches cooperate in a city-wide or county-wide revival campaign. These meetings are as saccharine as the pastor's prayer services. Christ is presented as an example, and little or nothing is mentioned respecting His saving grace and the necessity of a blood atonement (this might offend some of the cooperating pastors). Nevertheless each meeting is closed with a moral challenge and an invitation to those thus challenged to come forward *to receive Jesus into their hearts*: whatever this might mean.

The numbers associated with this type of evangelism agree with our text, which states, *the desolate* [i.e., Hagar, who represents the works of the law] *hath many more children than she*

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which hath an husband. The numbers associated with this type of evangelism have caused some to actually exhibit jealousy towards the churches who have reaped the numbers and the wealth, available through these false confessors, and to think this accelerated church growth must be a blessing from God.

This ought not to be. Those who stand for the truth of the saving grace of Jesus Christ would be better disposed to faithfully preach the truth of the gospel; instruct their people in the fundamentals of the faith; and wait patiently upon God to give *the increase* in accordance with His will, in His way and in His time. Such a wait is not apathy towards the redemption of the lost, nor is it apathy towards the spiritual growth of the believer, but is a manifestation of the hope of those who sow the Word of God and the faithfulness of God Who has promised to give the increase.

Even so God's increase may not satisfy the aspirations of some. Consider Noah. He preached for one hundred and twenty years, and there were only seven, besides himself, that entered into the ark. From man's perspective eight souls would not be considered much of an increase, but from God's perspective, Noah reaped one hundred percent of that which God gave him. Thus Noah illustrates the patience required to faithfully labor in the service of the Lord, expectant of His increase, in His way and in His time. In this regard, Paul wrote:

... we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Romans 5:3-5)

The Greek word for *tribulations* in this text is *thlipsis*. It means: a pressing together; pressure; oppression; affliction; distress, etc. Thus it can be the stress of circumstances. Noah

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is a good example of someone who must have felt the pressure of his circumstances. He was called of God to build the ark for a refuge against an impending flood, which was something that was unknown in that day. Prior to the flood, it had never rained upon the earth: *But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.* Consequently rain and flooding were completely outside of the experience of the people of that day. Noah's warning of a flood and his building of the ark for a refuge against the flood must have appeared ludicrous to those who heard his message.

We have seen the same sort of mockery against the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and events at the end of the millennium. Prior to World War Two and the advent of the atomic bomb, the intellectual community scoffed at the idea of the *elements melting with fervent heat*; and prior to this space age, with satellite communications, the same sort of people have scoffed at the idea that *every eye shall see him*, when Christ comes at His second coming. Despite these technological advancements, which have made the above conditions possible at a human level, men still scoff at the idea of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such scoffing is not new. The mockery of those who believed in the second coming was in evidence in the first century:

This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. (II Peter 3:1-7)

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We know Noah and his family experienced mocking derision as they were ridiculed for believing what the world considered a preposterous thing. Nevertheless, *The Word of the Lord standeth sure*. Despite the ridicule and the apparent foolishness of his tasks, Noah bore the pressure of his mocking neighbors and faithfully performed that which God had committed to his trust. Then:

... the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female. Of fowls also of the air by sevens, the male and the female; to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth. For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. And Noah did according unto all that the LORD commanded him. (Genesis 7:1-5)

At the end of those seven days it began to rain. It rained for forty days and forty nights, so that the earth began to flood. The ark was borne upon the waters of the flood, and Noah and those in the ark with him escaped the judgment that God had sent upon the earth. Noah had patiently endured the pressures of proclaiming the truth for one hundred and twenty years. All of the mockery and scoffing of those who had taunted him, as he faithfully ministered in the things God had committed to his trust, were gone: for *All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died*.

They died because they were not in the ark (which in the typology of Scripture represents the Lord Jesus Christ). They were not in the ark because they did not believe the message Noah had proclaimed. Noah and his family were in the ark because they believed God. This is the same reason genuine believers are *in Christ*. It is *not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy*

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Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

In this regard, we must remember that our Lord told us, *And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.* We can expect the same sort of response to the message we preach and the same sort of numbers of believers, relatively speaking, who are really *in Christ*, as we near the day of the coming of our Lord.

We have learned from our text that Hagar, who along with Ishmael represents the *other gospel* of the Judaizers, has many more children than Sarah, who along with Isaac represents the promise of God of salvation by grace through faith. Thus:

... for these [Abraham's two sons] are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. (Galatians 4:24-28, emphasis mine)

In this allegory Paul expressed the same truth that our Lord had expressed to his disciples after the feeding of the five thousand. The Lord Jesus said, *It is the [S]pirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life* (John 6:63). Paul taught the Galatians that what Abraham had produced through the energy of the flesh had no inheritance in the things of God. He taught them that everything they were endeavoring to do through ritual and law had no profit before God.

The flesh stands condemned before God because the flesh is at war with the Spirit. For a believer to offer to God what God has condemned, makes no sense at all. This is what king Saul endeavored to do when God ordered him to fight against the Amalekites and utterly destroy them.

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He was not to save anything alive. The Amalekites were related to Ishmael, who in Paul's allegory represents the flesh. The Amalekites fought against Israel as the Jews came out of Egypt. In that battle, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of Exodus, God declared that He was at war with Amalek from generation to generation. Thus in the typology of Scripture, the Amalekites also represent the flesh. When king Saul returned from the battle with the Amalekites, the prophet Samuel asked him if he had done the will of the Lord. Whereupon Saul declared:

... Blessed be thou of the LORD: I have performed the commandment of the LORD. And Samuel said, What meaneth then this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear? And Saul said, They have brought them from the Amalekites: for the people spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the LORD thy God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed. (I Samuel 15:13-15)

Saul's failure to perform the will of the Lord in destroying the Amalekites was born of fleshly reasoning: surely the best of the sheep and of the oxen could be sacrificed unto the Lord. Even so nothing was said to suggest that he should save Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive, nor was anything said to suggest that he should save the best of the sheep and the oxen alive. They were to be utterly destroyed. The explicit command was:

... I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way, when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass. (I Samuel 15:2-3)

Nevertheless Saul did what so many that name the name of Christ have done and are doing; he did not regard all of the sheep and all of the oxen of the Amalekites, as well as king Agag, to be condemned of God. He sought to justify his actions by finding something good in them that could be used of the Lord. This was a convoluted sense of logic: to think that he could offer to God what God had already condemned. The Amalekites, and all that they had, represented the

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flesh, and the Scriptures are very clear about God's interest in the flesh:

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (Galatians 5:17)

In a similar manner the modern-day evangelist has sought to produce revival in the churches. I have no personal argument against revival, but one has to ask the question, revival to what? An examination of what is called revival discloses that most so-called revivals are not revivals of the people of God to the truth of the Word of God, but are revivals of fleshly efforts to please God by touch not; taste not; and handle not commandments and doctrines of men which are to perish with the using (Colossians 2:20-22). In reality, the thrust of the Judaizers was exactly the same as the thrust of the modern-day revivalist. It is obvious, then, that the Judaizers, as well as the modern-day revivalist, did not, and do not, understand Paul's allegory. They did not understand that *no flesh should glory in God's presence*.

Paul's allegory, then, was important to the Galatians' understanding of the difference between law and grace, as well as being important to our understanding. There is no question that Abraham had good intentions when he went into Hagar and tried to produce the son of God's promise by his own fleshly efforts. Good intentions, then, are not a barometer for determining the will of God, but the Word of God is. It is rather strange, then, considering the Word of God, when Abraham was told that he would have a son at age one hundred, he desired rather that his efforts in the production of his son Ishmael might stand; so that, he cried out to the Lord, *O, that Ishmael might live before thee!* This has been the cry of many who name the name of Christ. Our human nature is steeped in ego and its ability to perform. Our human nature desires to produce

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something of which we can boast before God. Our human nature fights against the concept of salvation by grace, apart from the deeds of the law. This, then, is the reason *the old man* must be reckoned dead on a daily basis.

Despite former tendencies to the flesh, we find that both Abraham and Sarah came to believe the promise of God concerning the birth of Isaac and to rest in the promise of his birth. This enabled them to rest in the promise: *in Isaac shall thy seed be called*. Thus in God's time and in accordance with God's promise, Isaac was miraculously born. Abraham was one hundred and Sarah ninety years of age. Five years later, on the official day of Isaac's weaning, Abraham made a feast for him:

And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned. And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. (Genesis 21:8-10, emphasis mine)

It was this portion of the historical record that Paul called upon to show that there is no inheritance in the things of God by the works of the flesh. Ishmael mocked Isaac, as those in the religious world mock the concept of salvation by grace through faith alone. They mock the grace of God because a *way which seemeth right unto a man* demands some human effort, either in the form of ritual, or works, or both. Nevertheless Sarah's cry rings loud and clear, *Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac*. At this point, the Old Testament record tells us:

And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. (Genesis 21:11-12)

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No matter how we might feel about our human morality and the efforts of the flesh in our relationship with God, or no matter how the Judaizers and the Galatians felt, God said to Abraham, *hearken unto her voice*. He was to hearken to the voice of Sarah, who represents grace and faith, rather than desiring that his human efforts be able to stand before God. Abraham's cry, *O, that Ishmael might live before thee!* had to bow to the cry of Sarah, *Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac*.

Hagar and Ishmael had a historical relationship in the history of Abraham, as the law had a historical relationship with the nation of Israel. Even so Ishmael was not the son of God's promise, he was the son of the flesh; neither are they children of God who seek to be justified before God by the works of the law, but *in Isaac shall thy seed be called*. Thus we, with Isaac are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Consequently Paul admonished the Galatians: *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage* (Galatians 5:1).