

## The Covenants, Grace and Law (Part 27)

### Galatians (D)

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One of the points from the last sermon that I want to make abundantly clear is that the Old Covenant was not added to the Abrahamic Covenant. It was simply an additional covenant. The Abrahamic Covenant was a covenant on its own, and the Old Covenant was a separate and additional covenant of its own.

These two covenants—the Abrahamic Covenant and the Old Covenant—stand in relation to each other in much the same way that the special Sabbath Covenant (which appears in Exodus 31, and was a separate covenant on its own) stands in relation to the Old Covenant. The Sabbath Covenant establishes that the Sabbath is the sign of God's people. It was a separate covenant in addition to the Old Covenant.

Galatians 3:15 [Paul says:] Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannuls, or adds thereto.

This is why I am saying that the Old Covenant is not added to the Abrahamic Covenant. You cannot add to something that has already been signed, sealed, and delivered. The Old Covenant was simply an additional covenant.

Galatians 3:16-17 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, "And to seeds," as of many; but as of one, "And to your Seed," which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Paul wrote those three verses to assure all that the Abrahamic Covenant, which contained those wonderful promises that Mr. Armstrong simply termed "the race and grace promises," was in no way negated or canceled out by the Old Covenant.

Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serves the law? It was added...

Remember, *the law* here is simply an all-encompassing term that means the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was *an additional covenant* made to last until Christ should come, because Israel was so sinful. Let us read it.

Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serves the law? It was added because

of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

The Old Covenant was made to work in conjunction with the Abrahamic Covenant—to prepare Israel to inherit the Promised Land and to be their guide, in civil government and religious worship, as a carnal nation of this world. It was a stopgap measure that is now obsolete ('until Christ should confirm the promises'), thus setting the stage for the next step in God's plan. Another way of putting it would be that the Old Covenant was a bridge from the Abrahamic Covenant until Christ should come and propose the New Covenant.

The next step in God's plan is the New Covenant, which greatly expands God's purpose and plan to include all peoples on earth. This was because the Abrahamic Covenant only covered those who were physically descendants of Abraham.

Do you see what has happened here? He makes the Abrahamic Covenant with Abraham and his seeds, his descendants. Then Israel grows to a nation. He adds an additional covenant that is going to cover that expanse of time until the Seed should come and a New Covenant is proposed that expands out the promises, and God's purpose and plan, to include all of mankind.

So the New Covenant greatly expands God's purpose, to include all peoples on earth; but *each in his own order*, according to I Corinthians 15, into God's eternal, spiritual purpose—which is the expansion of His own Family, the Kingdom of God. That is, all who are in His own image and who are 'at one' with Him.

Galatians 3:19-20 Wherefore then serves the law [Old Covenant]? It was added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

In other words, it takes at least two people to make a covenant; and God was one of those parties.

Galatians 3:21-22 Is the law [the Old Covenant] then against the promises of God? God forbid. For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

In Hebrews 10, Paul is obviously talking about the sacrifices of the Old Covenant; and he says:

Hebrews 10:3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

Most specifically, I think he is referring to the Day of Atonement; but sacrifices reminded people of sin. Though the verse here is speaking specifically of the ceremonial laws, it is the principle that I am concerned about. The Old Covenant kept the knowledge of God's laws—the very laws that Abraham obeyed—in the Israelites' minds. You see, there was a remembrance brought to mind by the ceremonies, by the rituals that they had to go through.

Galatians 3:19 is saying, in plain language, that the Old Covenant was added to work alongside the Abrahamic Covenant. When I say "alongside" I am translating that word "added" literally, because that is what it means. It was devised by God to work *alongside* the covenant that God made with Abraham and his descendants.

One of the major points made through Israel's experiences with the Old Covenant was the absolute need of a Savior. Neither the covenant nor the law possessed the power to give life, of and by themselves. The Old Covenant—we might say "the law"—could teach. It could guide. It could correct. It could condemn. It could make a person feel guilty. But it could not give life!

That was not ever its intention. That is why Paul said, if there had been a law made that can do this, this would have been the one. But it is not there, because there is no power to give life in that sort of an arrangement. If I can put it this way, what God is saying here is: Life comes only from life. Life comes only from pre-existing life. It has to come from a Living Savior who gives life. It cannot come from that Savior's law.

So what happened is that everybody ended their experience under the Old Covenant guilty before God. The conclusion of that experience, as contained in the historical record in the Old Testament, is that Israel needed a Savior. What was the purpose of the law? To lead to Christ! It was intended to lead them to see the need for a Savior, because the law could not save.

Indeed, Israel needed faith in that Savior if they were ever going to be released from the bondage imposed by their own transgressions. But nowhere is Paul saying here that the Savior does away with the laws of God. He is saying that righteousness—and therefore life—cannot come through the law. They must come through *faith in the Savior*.

This agrees perfectly with Hebrews 8:8-13, where it plainly states that the Old Covenant is now obsolete; but laws are an integral part of the New Covenant. God says, "I will write My laws in their heart." Laws cannot be separated away from the New Covenant.

It is now our responsibility, under the greatly expanded New Covenant, to consider the laws of God in the light of our circumstance under the New Covenant and apply them under their letter where applicable, and in their spirit where a direct 'letter of the law' application is no longer possible.

Galatians 3:23-25 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

Let us consider these three verses. In verse 23, my King James Version uses the word "kept."

But in the margin of my Bible, it says "guarded." The Old Covenant is viewed by Paul as a guardian. If you look this word up in something like Vine's New Testament Words, you will find that this word "kept" means guarded, or in custody.

We see the word "schoolmaster" in verses 24-25: "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster" and "We are not longer under a schoolmaster". But the word "schoolmaster" is somewhat misleading in this context. It means guide. It means guardian, supervision, or it can be translated custodian. The idea of teacher is not a part of this word.

Remember "the law" refers to the whole Old Covenant (not just the Ten Commandments, but also the civil and ceremonial laws of the Covenant) and that the whole Old Covenant was an added covenant. That is, a covenant *in addition to* the Abrahamic Covenant. And a final item to remember is a very important one. That is, that the subject is justification—not sanctification, glorification, or salvation. The subject of the whole book of Galatians is *justification*.

I am going to read that series of verses from the Revised English Bible.

Galatians 3:23-25 (REB) Before this faith [meaning the faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ] came, we were close prisoners in the custody of law pending the revelation of faith. [Paul is saying we, or the Israelites, were "kept in hold."] The law was thus put in charge of us until Christ should come, when we should be justified through faith. And now that faith has come, its charge is at an end.

Not law! Its charge! Did you ever hear of an occasion in all of the history of man in which a guilty person was acquitted, and then as soon as he was acquitted, they did away with the law, or the laws, that he broke? No. That only happens in false theology.

God added the Old Covenant to serve as a bridge. It was a temporary measure that He instituted to provide certain things for the Israelites, only until Christ would come. It was never intended to save anybody. It could guide. But, in the end—because men broke the commandments, broke the terms—they were held "in hold" pending the conclusion of the Old Covenant's usefulness. Then, when faith came, the opportunity to be released from "the hold" came.

We know, for these people who literally went through this, that is not going to occur until the Great White Throne Judgment. But they are going to remember their experiences; and the book of Galatians is going to leap out to them, and they are going to understand what went on. They are going to understand that they are going to be justified by faith in Jesus Christ. But the Old Covenant served its purpose until that portion of God's plan—where the Seed would come, and die for mankind, and be the Savior, and then we could have faith in Him—then the Old Covenant's responsibility was over and we could then live by faith.

But it did not do away with laws. We are going to see this abundantly proved as we go along, because Paul keeps adding on one proof after another. So he is not saying that the laws that define sin, or guide us in the way, are done away. He is saying that the whole Old Covenant's

function is ended. He is saying that they were held in custody because they sinned, and the wages of sin is death. But when Christ died for sin, and they had faith in the same, they were justified and released from the custodianship of the Old Covenant. That began to occur when Christ died and the New Covenant was proposed. The first-century church, then, literally was able to experience that.

Another perspective on this same scenario in Galatians 3: 23-25 is that the Old Covenant was to guard, or to protect, Israel from the gross idolatries of the pagan nations around them. This is certainly true, because it showed them God's way in contrast to the nations around them; and then, when Christ came, they were released from that guardianship.

The Abrahamic Covenant began God's relationship with Abraham and his seed. *The Old Covenant was added to that relationship*—not to the Abrahamic Covenant. Understand? It is *the relationship* that it was added to. It was added because Israel had gotten so far away from fulfilling their part of the Abrahamic Covenant; and it was added in order to prepare them for the coming of Christ; and it was added to cover the circumstances in that relationship that would arise because Israel was a nation of this world. [Those are the] three major reasons—or three major functions—that the Old Covenant served in that period of time between the coming out of Egypt and the coming of Christ.

However, there was no provision under the terms of the Old Covenant for justification. In other words, there was no provision for the forgiveness of sin. And without the forgiveness of sin, there is no justification.

Hebrews 10: 3-5 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. [The sacrifices could not do it.] Wherefore when He comes into the world [the promised Seed, Christ], He says, "Sacrifice and offering You would not, but a body have You prepared Me."

That is a prayer that He made to the Father, realizing what part of His responsibility was while He was on earth.

Hebrews 10: 6-7 "In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have had no pleasure. Then said I, 'Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,)

That is, in the Old Testament was the prophecy.

Hebrews 10: 7-9 "...to do Your will, O God." Above when He said, "Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin You would not, neither had pleasure therein"; which are offered by the law; Then said He, "Lo, I come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first [covenant], that He may establish the second.

Or: He takes away the first (set of sacrifices), that He may establish the second (which is the sacrifice of Christ).

Hebrews 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Now the shortcoming, if I can put it that way, in the Old Covenant is made up. But since it was not part of the Old Covenant, the Old Covenant is now obsolete. It has no use. Since it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to forgive sins, there was no provision for the forgiveness of sin under the Old Covenant.

This does not mean that there were no sins forgiven during that period of time—let us say from Moses to Christ—because there were sins forgiven. David's sins were forgiven. But how? Just like Abel, just like Abraham, David, and all others who lived during the period of time and looked forward in faith for the Sacrifice that would come.

So what were they justified by? By faith, by God's grace—because they believed that the sacrifice for their sins would be made in the future by the Messiah.

What they looked forward to, we look back on as an already accomplished fact. Christ died for our sins, and our sins are forgiven by the same way that their sins were forgiven. They looked forward to it, and we look back on it. We are forgiven—justified—*by grace through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ*. So were they. The only difference is that they looked forward to it and we look backward on it as something already accomplished.

There was no provision for that in the Old Covenant. It was something that was apart from it. And that is the issue here. Once Christ came and died, the Old Covenant had served its purpose; and therefore its guardianship was no longer needed—Galatians 3: 25. But God's covenant with Abraham still remains in effect. Therefore:

Galatians 3:26 For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, we become children of Abraham once we are justified by faith in Christ's sacrifice. So you see that the Abrahamic Covenant and the promises God made are still in effect. God is going to fulfill those promises. Abraham is going to have multiple billions of descendants. But now we see the real purpose of that covenant in that Abraham's children actually, under God's spiritual purpose, also become God's children.

Galatians 3:27-29 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one [in one Family] in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ's [because we have been forgiven, and because we have been justified by faith in His blood], then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the

promise.

In making the New Covenant—once we have proceeded through the process of repentance and baptism, and have received God's Spirit—which baptizes us into Christ—we are then Abraham's children. That is, we are Abraham's descendants regardless of our race, regardless of our national origin. We are therefore part of that one Family into which God is drawing all of mankind, and we are made heirs of the promises made to Abraham as part of the Abrahamic Covenant. All the Old Covenant did was bridge the gap from the time Israel was released from their bondage until the promised Seed came.

Genesis 15:1-6 After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, "Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward." And Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abram said, "Behold, to me You have given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir." And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, "This shall not be your heir [meaning Eliezer]; but he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be your heir." And He brought him forth abroad, and said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if you be able to number them." And He said unto him, "So shall your seed be." And he believed in the Lord: and He counted it to him for righteousness.

Abraham was concerned that he had no children. In this section, God promised him that he would have countless children. Into this comes faith. Abraham believed Him. It is that simple. When it says that Abraham believed, we can understand from other portions of the Bible that his belief was such that it motivated him to submit—to obey God.

Genesis 17:1-2 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be you perfect. [Remember that.] And I will make My covenant between Me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly."

I want you to see—by that command, "Be you perfect"—Abraham had to do something to fulfill his part of the covenant.

Genesis 17:3-5 And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, and you shall be a father of many nations. Neither shall your name any more be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made you."

It had not even happened yet. Abraham still did not have his first natural child, but God is

talking about it in the past tense. He talks of things that are not as if they already are.

Genesis 17:6-8 "And I will make you exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come out of you. And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your seed after you in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto you, and to your seed after you. And I will give unto you, and to your seed after you, the land wherein you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

In chapter 17, God more formally makes an agreement—a covenant—with Abraham, presenting its terms in a general way. Abraham was to be *perfect*. I have seen in other Bibles where that is translated upright, blameless, or sincere.

Do not be misled by the word "sincere," because the meaning of that word has changed over the years. Now, when we say the word "sincere," it simply means that we have good intentions. But that is not really what the word means. The word means *without flaw*. That is, no imperfections.

Abraham had to meet some conditions here. He had to live a life of obedience. He had to submit to God. And it was strong enough, and God raised the standard so high for him, that you would almost think that he had to be without sin. Does this begin to remind you of something? You might say, in Jesus' opening shot in the Sermon on the Mount—He calls upon us to be "perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

The word can also be translated "mature." It can also be translated "complete." It sounds to me like it is very similar to what God said to Abraham. What is Jesus beginning to do? He is beginning to introduce concepts that are part and parcel of both the Abrahamic Covenant and will also be part and parcel of the New Covenant.

Now, Abraham is very plainly called "the father of the faithful." It is as though he is the head of the family. It is as though as the head of that family, he, of all who have ever lived, with the exception of Jesus Christ, is the model after which we are to mold ourselves.

Jesus was not human in quite the same way as Abraham and all the rest of us are. He was 'God in the flesh' while we are just 'flesh' who have the gift of God's Spirit. He had the Spirit without measure, but we have to grow in that way. He had to grow too, but there is somewhat of a difference there. And so Abraham is looked upon as being the head of the family.

We also saw (back in Galatians 3) that, if you are Christ's, you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Things are beginning to come together here within God's purpose, and they are coming together within the church.

Genesis 26:1-2 And there was a famine in the land, beside the first famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went unto Abimelech king of the Philistines unto Gerar. And the Lord appeared unto him, and said, "Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I

shall tell you of."

Isaac was about to do the same thing that Abraham did. When there was a famine in the land, he was going to go down to Egypt. But, in this case, God intervened; and He said, "Do not go there." He was in a sense saying, "Stay here. Live by faith. I will take care of you."

Genesis 26:3-5 "Sojourn in this land [where the famine was], and I will be with you, and will bless you; for unto you, and unto your seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham your father. And I will make your seed [Now the baton is being passed—from Abraham to Isaac.] to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto your seed all these countries; and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: Because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws."

Now we see that Abraham passed the test. What did he do? Abraham upheld his end of the covenant. *Because that Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.*

I have kind of gone way around the pole, you might say, in order to impress upon you the fact that under the New Covenant the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant are valid and that Abraham is our spiritual father, as it were. He is the model of the family. And the model of the family, with whom God first made the covenant, obeyed God's voice. He kept God's charge. He kept the commandments and he kept *the laws* and Abraham's children are going to do the same thing! Otherwise, they will not show the characteristics of Abraham; and they will not really be his children.

Paul is not doing away with laws in the book of Galatians! He is simply saying law keeping cannot justify us. It is that simple. Sometimes we have to go way around the pole in order to get to the root of things. We see here, by God's own witness that Abraham lived up to the terms of the covenant. And because he did, it was being passed on to Isaac for him to do as his father, Abraham, had done.

But the problem of transgressions to the terms of the Old Covenant was not resolved until the promised Seed, Christ, came. When He came, He lived perfectly. He qualified to be the payment for sin and, at the same time, He confirmed the promises that were made unto Abraham—and they were made absolutely, eternally binding. God then proposed the New Covenant that He had previously prophesied of (in Jeremiah 31), which ties everything into one neat package. And He has presented it to all of mankind—not just Abraham's physical descendants.

It is not circumcision which makes one a part of this covenant. That was the sign that was given to Abraham and his physical descendants. Rather, it is *circumcision of the heart!* It is repentance and faith in the sacrifice of the promised Seed (Jesus Christ) that is *the sign*; and the receipt of the Holy Spirit is *the seal*. It authenticates what has occurred. It completes the making of the New Covenant with the individuals that God is calling.

Nowhere does God say that the laws that define sin are done away. On the contrary, the One who made the New Covenant possible said that not one jot or tittle was going to pass from the law until all was fulfilled.

In addition to that, if we need even more proof, we see the examples of Jesus and the apostles keeping the Sabbath and the holy days. That involves the Fourth Commandment. We see Peter declaring that he had never eaten anything common or unclean many years after Christ's death and resurrection. We see Paul circumcising Timothy, and concluding a vow—showing that even the ceremonies are not against the New Covenant.

In other words, the conclusion of an agreement—the Covenant—concludes that agreement. But it does not mean that the terms of that 'concluded agreement' cannot be part and parcel of yet another agreement. When a couple divorces, it does not mean the terms (or even some of the terms) used in that marriage agreement cannot be used in another marriage, even of the same couple should they be free to remarry and choose to do so.

God's moral and spiritual laws have been from eternity, and an agreement between Him and mere man is not going to do away with them. God Himself would have to pass from existence for that to occur. In addition to that, the loving intent of those laws as they apply in human relationships is still valid as well.

The ceremonial aspects of the Old Covenant are not longer applicable under the New Covenant for a couple of major reasons. One is that they, with their physical and visual application—more than any other aspect of Israel's life as a nation under God and yet part of this world—made them separate and distinct from the Gentile nations. However, God's plan shifted gears, so to speak; and God, under the New Covenant, was not going to use Israel in that same manner as He had under the Old Covenant.

Instead, what did He do? He formed the church! It is the Israel of God indicating that the physical nation of Israel is no longer "of God." So He formed the church, and the church does not consist of people from only one ancestor—but of people of all nations being brought into the one Family of God. This, incidentally, is what Paul addresses more completely in the book of Ephesians.

Here is an interesting thing. I said that the ceremonies, more than any other single thing, is what identified Israel as a nation that was in the world but separate from all the other nations. It played a part in driving the Gentiles up the wall and building barriers between them. It was not entirely just the sacrifices themselves, but also the way that the Israelites acted towards the Gentiles. But the sacrifices did play a part in that.

The family that God is drawing us into—what is it that makes us separate and distinct from the world? God makes it very clear. It is the way we live! Not ceremonies, not rituals; but the way we live. And Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another."

God then moved to insure that the ceremonies could not be performed. He did this by allowing the temple and the altar to be destroyed, and scattering the Levites all over the world so that they are virtually lost. Those three things are necessary for making the sacrifices. In order to

get the focus away from the nation of Israel and the Old Covenant, God made sure that they could not make those sacrifices. (1) They had to be made at the temple. (2) They had to be made on one altar. And (3) it had to be done by the Levites, and specifically the family of Aaron.

God got that out of the way because He wants people to focus on the way His children live! And His children live according to His law. You do away with His law, and you cannot *live according to His law*. This whole thing, in one sense, is stupid. You cannot show the characteristics of God unless you know the way that He lives; and He lives according to His law, which describes Him.

What we see today is Judaism—the remnants of that religion that existed at the time of Christ. We see Judaism without ceremonies. But, before we get our thinking maybe too far in the wrong direction, this in no way means that the spiritual intent of those ceremonies is done away. Though we are no longer required to cut an animal's throat, bleed its blood out, and burn it on an altar—the intent, the stretching out of those principles, still applies.

Thus, Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "If your eye offend you, pluck it out." That is an indication of quite a sacrifice so that we do not sin. "If your hand offend you, cut it off." It is very plain that Jesus expects His people to make sacrifices in order that they do not sin. Paul said, "Mortify [put to death] therefore your members which are on earth." He also said that we are to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God. He further said that we are to live in love—as Christ loved us and gave Himself up on our behalf, an offering and sacrifice whose fragrance is pleasing to God.

So the principle of *sacrifice* still remains. This is why Jesus could say that not one jot or tittle of that law would pass until all is fulfilled. Brethren, in the book of Galatians the laws of God are hardly even in question except as they pertain to justification. Those laws which define sin, which guide us in the way of God, are just as binding as they ever have been; and they always will be because God is using them to prepare us to live 'at one' with Him and His Family.

I am going to jump all the way down to Galatians 4: 21, because we have already gone through the first 10 or 11 verses in a previous sermon; and it is not until verse 21 that Paul gets back into his arguments that he is presenting here. In between verses 10 and 21, Paul is expressing personal things that do not bear directly on the doctrinal issue that is facing us.

Galatians 4:21-26 Tell me, you that desire to be under the law, do you 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 gendered to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers 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.

Paul, as he sometimes did, turned to an allegory in order to illustrate a point. An allegory is an

illustration that uses symbolic figures. Sometimes those figures are people, and sometimes they are objects used to express truth in a general way. They are not often very specific. They are general.

In this allegory, Paul is giving yet another point of reference regarding, you guessed it, justification. In verse 21, it does not mean that Paul's opponents in Galatia were actually going around saying, "Let us all do this so that we can be slaves." Nobody wants to be a slave; and for them to say that, and expect people to join with them, is not reasonable.

What is being said there is Paul's assessment of their spiritual condition. Even though they were not saying, "Let us all do this and be slaves," that was what was literally occurring to them in what they believed and were practicing—in attempting to use the law for justification, and virtually leaving Christ out of the picture. We will see this more clearly as we go through this and on up to chapter 5. That thing about leaving Christ out of the picture is very important.

In verse 22, the bondmaid was Hagar. The freewoman was Sarah. In verse 23, "he who was of the bondwoman" was Ishmael, and "from the freewoman" was Isaac. Think about the circumstances of their birth. Ishmael was conceived, and thus born, only by carnal means. Everything was normal. That is, the way people normally have children. The story is very clearly told, however, how Isaac was conceived only because God promised him to Abraham and Sarah; and a miracle occurred which permitted conception, and thus birth. If God had not worked the miracle, Isaac would not have been born.

In verses 24-26, the two ladies represent the two Covenants. The two sons represent what is produced from the Covenants. Hagar/Ishmael—Old Covenant—give birth to bondage. Sarah/Isaac—New Covenant—give birth to freedom. It is very important to note that Paul does not say the Old Covenant *was* bondage, but rather that it *gave birth to* bondage. There is a big, big difference between the two.

The opposite is true of the New Covenant. It gives birth to liberty. So what is he getting at? The answer becomes clear when we remember his previous instruction regarding justification and the Old Covenant. Again, the Old Covenant provided no means of justification. Its administration (What did he call it, in II Corinthians 3?) was an administration of death.

Because people sinned, and there was no means of justification, the people were held "in hold"—they were held in bondage—to what? To the death penalty! There was no way out, unless they met the condition of faith. Paul expands on this a bit back in Romans 6.

Romans 6:14-18 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know you not, that to whom you yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin...

That is something the Old Covenant could not do. All it could do was continually produce bondage. But those under the New Covenant can be made free from sin.

Romans 6:18-19 Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity [just going from bad to worse]; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

Would Paul contradict himself? Absolutely not! Galatians 4 is in perfect harmony with Romans 6.

Romans 6:20-21 For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness. What fruit had you then in those things...?

What could the Old Covenant produce? All it could produce was bondage and death.

Romans 6:21 What fruit had you then in those things whereof you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

Hagar, Ishmael, the Old Covenant gave birth to bondage—bondage to sin and death, because God had not provided a way out through that Covenant.

Romans 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

Sarah, Isaac, the New Covenant gives birth to freedom and life, because juxtaposed within there is the Promised Seed, forgiveness, and justification.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 7:4-5 Wherefore, my brethren, you also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law..

That is where their strength and their power lay. The wages of sin is death. On the positive side, the law can guide; but, on the negative side, the law can only condemn a person to the bondage of death if they sin.

Romans 7:5, 7-8 For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sin,

which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. No, I had not know sin, but by the law: for I had not know lust, except the law had said, "You shall not covet." But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, worked in me all manner of concupiscence, for without the law [or, apart from the law] sin was dead.

If there had been no law, there would have been no sin. There would have been nothing there.

Romans 7:9 For I was alive without the law once [That is, without knowledge of what it meant.]: but when the commandment came [That is, when he understood.], sin revived, and I died.

Paul knew that he was as good as dead, because he had broken the law.

Romans 7:10-13 And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me. Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin [There is the problem. It is not the law. It is sin.], that it might appear sin [because the law revealed what sin is], working death in me by that which is good [the law]; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Paul, then, used the allegory in Galatians to teach that same truth that we just saw there in Romans 6-7. What Paul is saying is that the Old Covenant—even though it contained the law of God—could not resolve dilemma of how to get free from bondage to sin and death. The law, the Old Covenant, defines sin without providing deliverance into freedom.

We will conclude here:

Galatians 4:27-31 For it is written, "Rejoice, you barren that bears not; break forth and cry, you that travails not: for the desolate has many more children than she which has 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 said the scriptures? "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.

The New Covenant gave birth to freedom from the bondage of sin and death because it does provide for justification—through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Sarah, therefore,

corresponds to Jerusalem above; and the church is seen as the children, just as miraculously conceived as Isaac and free because of the combination of justification and the Spirit of God—both of which are contained in the New Covenant.

And so the bondwoman—the Old Covenant, and what it produced—what happened to it? It is thrown out! In a different context, Paul said it is made obsolete. Why? It served its purpose. That is all. There is nothing complex about that. It was merely a bridge until Christ. It could not deliver. But it did serve God's purpose for that time that then was.

But the freewoman—the New Covenant and what it is—remains and continues to produce.

We will stop there; and the next time I speak, God willing, we will pick it up in Galatians 5 because the first several verses there are very, very interesting.