Galatians Summary: **God cares about the heart, not external metrics**	1:1-2:14 'My message is true'	2:15-5:26 'Here's my message'	6:1-18 'Go and implement my message'

Galatians 4:1-31 (ESVUK) **Sunday 8 November 2026**

4 I mean that the heir,
as long as he is a child,
is no different from a slave,[a]
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[b] 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.
[8] 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!
[11] I am afraid I may have laboured over you in vain.

1. Can I obey the law now? (4:1-11)

'No! It's as bad as pagan idolatry!'

- Premise #1:
Jewish believers are no longer enslaved to the law

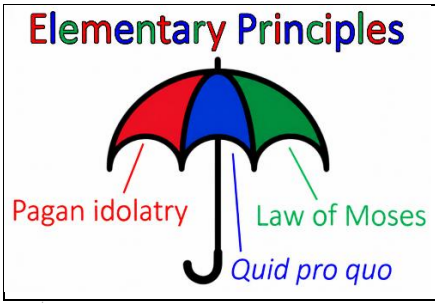
'As bad as pagan idolatry?'
How do you feel to hear pagan idolatry compared to the God-given, sweeter-than-honey law of Moses?

The disputed 'our' 4:6
Taken here to include both Jewish and Gentile believers

- Premise #2:
Galatian Gentile believers are no longer enslaved to pagan idolatry

- Galatian error:
In obeying some laws of Moses, the Galatians may as well be returning to pagan idolatry!!

(4:10) The Galatians had started observing Sabbaths, new moons, annual festivals such as Passover



1. How are elementary principles 'weak and worthless' (4:9)?
Neither the law of Moses nor pagan idolatry are a route to God's eternal blessing

2. Is Paul saying the law is somehow bad or evil?
No, but the *mechanism* of obtaining blessing is the same as pagan idolatry:
a. make a sacrifice and get a blessing back (*quid pro quo*)
b. the blessing is in *this* life (but Christians are waiting for *eternal* life cf. Gal 5:5)

[a] Greek *bondservant*; also verse 7

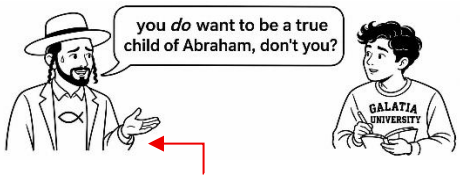
[b] Or *elemental spirits*; also verse 9

Andover Bible Church

2. False teachers (4:12-20)

Paul cares about the Galatians far more than the false teachers do

- 'remember how much you cared about me?



[12] Brothers,[a] I entreat you, become as I am,
for I also have become as you are.
You did me no wrong.
[13] You know it was because of a bodily ailment
that I preached the gospel to you at first,
[14] and though my condition was a trial to you,
you did not scorn or despise me,
but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.
[15] What then has become of the blessing you felt?
For I testify to you that, if possible,
you would have gouged out your eyes
and given them to me.
[16] Have I then become your enemy
by telling you the truth?[b]

- 'the false teachers don't even care about you!'

[17] They make much of you, but for no good purpose.
They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

- 'I really care about you!'

[18] It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose,
and not only when I am present with you,
[19] my little children,
for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth
until Christ is formed in you!
[20] I wish I could be present with you now
and change my tone,
for I am perplexed about you.

Paul's example
How does Paul set an example of showing genuine care for people even while correcting and rebuking them?

Applying Galatians today

Paul's letter to the Galatians appears to be against obeying the law of Moses specifically. Why then are we discussing being against 'caring about external metrics' or 'completable actions' (category C)?

a. The letter to the Galatians was clearly not written to us directly, so we read 'over their shoulders'

b. To the extent that we are similar to the Galatians, we want to learn the same lessons from the letter

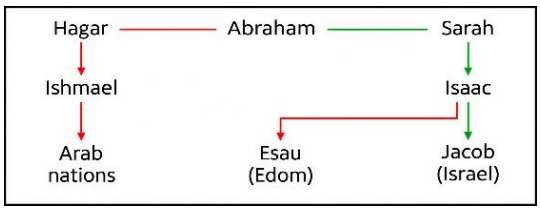
c. Extremely few Christians today are tempted to *appear Jewish* (circumcision, certain festivals)

d. But there are still godly-appearing, or even God-ordained, specific works that we care about, that Christians can over-emphasise.

A. True theology or worldview e.g. 'God promises a new creation!'	B. Godly attitude e.g. love, joy, patience	C. Godly completable works e.g. 'go to church', 'read your Bible'
D. False theology or worldview e.g. 'This creation is all there is'	E. Ungodly attitude e.g. envy, malice, selfishness	F. Ungodly specific works e.g. lying, stealing, using porn

[a] Or *Brothers and sisters*; also verses 28, 31

[b] Or *by dealing truthfully with you*



3. False teachers' message (4:21-31)

'Obeying the law is *so wrong* that it makes you theologically muslim!'

[21] Tell me, you who desire to be under the law,
do you not listen to the law?

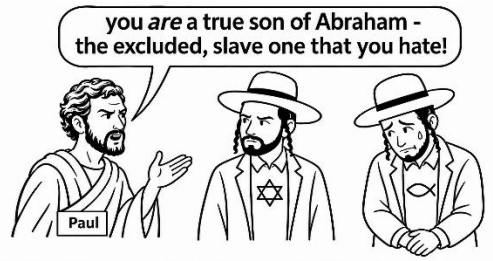
- the law: consider the terms and conditions! (cf. Lev 26, Deu 28)

[22] For it is written that Abraham had two sons,
one by a slave woman
and one by a free woman.
[23] But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh,
while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

- premise: Abraham has two sons, Isaac (heir) and Ishmael (eventually cast out slave)

[24] Now this may be interpreted allegorically:
these women are two covenants.
One is from Mount Sinai,
bearing children for slavery;
she is Hagar.
[25] Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia;[a]
she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, [incl. Peter & James!]
for she is in slavery with her children.

- Jews: are like Ishmael; they cannot have Abraham's blessings



[26] But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.
[27] For it is written,
"Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear;
break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labour!
For the children of the desolate one will be more
than those of the one who has a husband." [Isa 54:1]
[28] Now you,[b] brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

- Christians (MJs): are like Isaac; through faith they have Abraham's blessings
  - Isa 54: God's promise of a safe, secure, wrath-free relationship

[29] But just as at that time
he who was born according to the flesh
persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit,
so also it is now.

- Reassurances:
  1. there's always been enmity between 'flesh' & 'Spirit' camps

[30] But what does the Scripture say?
"Cast out the slave woman and her son,
for the son of the slave woman
shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." [Gen 21:10]

  2. The 'Spirit' camp gains blessing in the end

[31] So, brothers, we are not children of the slave
but of the free woman.

'As wrong as being a different religion?!'
How comfortable are you with the line of argument that Paul goes down? Why?

[a] Some manuscripts *For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia*

[b] Some manuscripts *we*

Implications of Galatians 4

A. True theology/worldview e.g. 'God promises a new creation!'	B. Godly attitude e.g. love, joy, patience	C. Godly completable works e.g. 'go to church', 'read your Bible'
D. False theology/worldview e.g. 'This creation is all there is'	E. Ungodly attitude e.g. envy, malice, selfishness	F. Ungodly specific works e.g. lying, stealing, using porn

1. The category C actions for the Galatians were circumcision and observing Jewish festivals. But Christians today are rarely tempted by these particular Cs. What are our Cs today, and how might we value them over A? E.g.
   a. You are assured that someone must be doing ok in their faith because they go to [Bible-teaching] Church
   b. Your Christian camp needs more leaders, so you pressure volunteers into leading, even though they are not mature enough in faith to handle the pressures of the role
   c. Someone is praised as a successful convert because they have adopted the church's habits and practices, without evidence that their worldview has changed
   d. You compare the amount of C you are doing to someone with less visible C, to reassure yourself that despite your personal sin, you are doing 'well enough' as a Christian
2. Paul calls *obeying some Jewish laws* as bad as pagan idolatry (4:1-11), and as wrong/stupid as being Muslim while thinking you're Jewish (4:21-31). Having identified some category C actions above,
   a. Are we prepared to say that apparently godly, even God-commanded, actions can be as bad as pagan idolatry when they arise from D rather than A?
   b. Are we prepared to say that churches which elevate C over A are, in effect and theology, mosques?

Getting back into Galatians 4

4:1-11
1. What is so effective about the way Paul sets up the privilege of having become believers in 4:1-8?
2. How do you feel about Paul calling both the law (4:3) and pagan idolatry (4:8) 'slavery'?
3. Why 'or rather to be known by God' (4:9)? Which wording comes more naturally to you?
4. How persuasive do you find Paul saying 'how can you turn *back* again' when the Galatians had never previously observed those laws? What makes you reluctant to adopt his view, if anything?
5. How do you feel about God's law being described as an 'elementary principle of the world'?

4:12-20
6. Why does Paul suddenly move from theological argument to a deeply personal appeal in 4:12? What effect does 'become as I am, for I also have become as you are' have?
7. 'Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?' (4:16). Why does Paul phrase the issue in terms of friendship/enmity? How does this challenge your instincts around correction?
8. What does Paul's repeated 'make much of you' and 'make much of them' (4:17) expose about the false teachers' relationship with the Galatians? How easily might we make similar mistakes?
9. What does 'until Christ is formed in you' suggest about what Paul actually wants for them?

4:21-31
10. What is the effect of Paul asking law-seekers, 'do you not listen to the law?' (4:21)?
11. How shocking is Paul's identification of Jerusalem with Hagar and slavery (4:24-26), especially to Jews who prized the law?
12. How persuaded are you that Paul's use of Isaiah 54 is to expand on God's promises to Abraham?
13. Why does Paul's argument climax with 'Cast out the slave woman and her son' (4:30)? How comfortable are you with the severity of this conclusion?

The Galatians ABCDEF grid explained 8 Nov 2026

A. True theology/worldview e.g. 'God promises a new creation!'	B. Godly attitude e.g. love, joy, patience	C. Godly completable works e.g. 'go to church', 'read your Bible'
D. False theology/worldview e.g. 'This creation is all there is'	E. Ungodly attitude e.g. envy, malice, selfishness	F. Ungodly specific works e.g. lying, stealing, using porn

1. We are saved by A only
2. Only faithful Bible teaching will grow A; D is pushed on us by everything else around us
3. Christianity is an A religion; Islam and Judaism are openly C religions
4. B follows A
5. C follows A
6. D leads to E and F, just as A leads to B and C
7. The same C can be performed because of A or D
8. Some Cs provide opportunities to grow in A, but do not guarantee growth in A
9. The same A will produce different Cs in people with different personalities and circumstances
10. Pastors emphasising particular Cs may discourage other legitimate Cs, or even accuse those pursuing them of E.
11. If all you ever hear is teaching about C, you will end up thinking D, being E, and doing F
12. If you care only for C, by definition you do not care about A
13. People prefer doing C to thinking about A
14. People cannot read other people's minds, so cannot judge with certainty whether others have A
15. But people can see how much C others do, so C easily becomes the basis on which we judge others and ourselves
16. Getting someone to do C without correcting their D changes their behaviour, but not their worldview.
17. It is very common for people to profess A while believing D
18. It is very common for people to use the Bible to teach D
19. Pastors who teach mostly A will see far less immediate, visible change than those who teach mostly C
20. If you care lots about A, some will accuse you of E