

THD-019 and 020 Galatians 4

*“Blessed [happy] are they
that hear the word of God,
and keep it.” (Luke 11:28)*

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Rom. 11:6, *"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."*

Gal. 2:21, *"I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."*

Gal. 3:24, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."

1 Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

Peter 1:2-3 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that [pertain] unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue...

*I am come that they might
have life, and that they might have it more
abundantly. John 10:10*

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” – John 15:9-11 ESV

Galatians 4:15
What has happened to all your joy?

Last week we looked at Peter's return to the
Approbation Motivator of the Sinful Nature and his loss
of Spiritual Direction - resulting in his falling into the
false doctrine of Legalism for Spirituality.

We'll get back on track with our journey through
Galatians today with a study based from Wuest's NT on
Galatians Chapter 4, but first let's do a quick review of
Galatians chapter 3 from the Holman Commentary, so
we can follow the context of Chapter 4 and since we
haven't seen Chapter 3 for 2 or 3 weeks:

Argument 1:**The Argument from Personal Experience (vv. 1–5)**

3:1. Paul is direct and stern as he calls the Galatians **foolish**.

They had fallen under the bewitching, deceptive spell of the Judaizers.

They accepted a message that implied the death of Christ was insufficient.

Paul had been so clear in presenting the gospel that he could say: **Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.**

They were now rejecting what they had seen, through Paul's preaching, with their own mind's eyes.

3:2. Paul in verses 2–5 asks four rhetorical questions to demonstrate that salvation is through faith alone. These questions concern the reception and work of the Holy Spirit.

He asks

(1) Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? The obvious implied answer is **by believing!**

3:3. (2) Are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

Paul declares them **foolish** for having begun the Christian life by faith but trying to reach maturity through human effort.

Since there was no way under the law for the Holy Spirit to sanctify, the Judaizers promoted the only means to maturity they knew: obedience to the law (compare 4:10; 5:2).

3:5. (4) Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles ... because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

The Holy Spirit enters the believer's life because of grace and not the law.

Argument 2:**Argument from Abraham (vv. 6–9)**

Supporting Idea: *Abraham, who lived before the law, was saved by faith.*

The blessings of Abraham (inheritance, sonship, and eternal life) were received by faith.

Therefore, grace is superior to the law.

3:6. The Judaizers pointed to the Law of Moses as the means to salvation.

Paul demonstrates that Abraham, who preceded Moses by 430 years, was saved by faith and not self-effort.

Quoting Genesis 15:6, Paul states Abraham **believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.**

To further discredit the Judaizers' emphasis on circumcision, Paul noted that Abraham was justified prior to his circumcision (Gen. 17:24).

Therefore, the Judaizers could not argue that the law and circumcision were necessary for salvation because Abraham was saved apart from both of them.

3:7–8. Abraham's real **children** are not his physical descendants but his spiritual descendants. His real children are those who believe God and are therefore justified by faith and not the law. This inclusion of the Gentiles in God's plan of salvation was revealed in God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:3) and is quoted here.

3:9. While provision is made for all to be blessed, only **those who have faith** are justified.

Argument 3:

Argument from the Curse of the Law (vv. 10–14)

Supporting Idea: *The law cannot justify. It can only bring judgment.*

Therefore, grace is superior to the law.

3:10. Paul quotes Deuteronomy 27:26 to prove that, contrary to what the Judaizers claimed, the law cannot justify and save.

It can only condemn.

The breaking of any aspect of the law brought a curse on the person who broke the law.

Since no one can keep the law perfectly, we are all cursed.

Paul, with this argument, destroys the Judaizers' belief that a person is saved through the law.

3:11. Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4: **The righteous will live by faith.**

This verse reveals that even during the time of the law people were justified by faith and not obedience to the law.

The Judaizers would have been wrong in their fundamental message even if they had lived during the time of Moses, because they misunderstood the purpose and power of the law.

3:12. The works of the law and the faith of the gospel have radically different consequences.

3:13. The positive solution to the curse of the law is in **Christ** who **redeemed us from the curse of the law.**

Redeem means “to buy out of slavery by paying a price.”

This word was used when someone purchased a slave for the purpose of freeing them.

When Jesus died on the cross, he took our curse upon himself.

Through his substitutionary atonement, Christ paid the penalty of the curse.

When we believe in him, he frees us from the slavery of the law.

3:14. Christ redeemed us, on the cross, for two purposes.

First, he redeemed us so that the **blessing given to Abraham** (salvation through faith) **might come to the Gentiles.**

Second, **he redeemed us ... by faith** so that the promise of the Holy Spirit could be given to all who believe (compare v. 2).

Argument 4:

Argument from the Permanence of Faith (vv. 15–18)

Supporting Idea: *Abraham was saved by faith 430 years before the law was given to Moses.*

Therefore, grace is superior to the law.

3:15–16. The Judaizers argued that since the law came after Abraham, then the law had priority over grace (salvation by faith alone).

To refute this point, Paul appeals to a permanently binding contract or will. Once a permanently binding contract is written and signed, it cannot be changed. Paul argues that God's promise of salvation by faith to Abraham was a binding contract and that nothing, not even the law, could change it. This promise of permanence was made to Abraham and his seed, Christ. The singular use of **seed** (NIV, "offspring") (compare Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7) was an allusion, not to Abraham's many physical descendants, but to the coming Messiah who would be the conveyer of blessing (see Matt. 1:1).

3:17–18. Paul clarifies that the **law**, which was given **430 years** after the Abrahamic grace promise, does not nullify justification by faith.

Faith is the permanent path to salvation.

The inheritance (that is, justification by faith) was given as an unconditional gift to those who believed. Contrary to what the Judaizers taught, the message of justification given to Abraham is permanent and has priority over the later law.

Argument 5:**Argument from the Purpose of the Law (vv. 19–25)**

Supporting Idea: *The law's purpose was never to save. Its purpose has always been to be a standard that would show us the magnitude of our sin, our need for grace, and, thus, lead us to Christ. The law was a temporary measure only until faith in Christ was inaugurated. Therefore, grace is superior to the law.*

3:19. Now Paul reveals **the purpose of the law** answering the question, “Why was a change made at Sinai?” Paul answers this question by explaining the one purpose and the two characteristics of the law. The **law was added because of transgressions**. *Transgressions* means “a stepping aside from a right track.” The law laid down a right track (perfect standard) and made people aware when they were deviating from that perfect path. Yet the law was temporary. Its end point was the coming of the Seed (Christ, the Messiah). It is also inferior to Abraham and faith because it needed a mediator (angels and Moses on Mount Sinai).

3:20. Because the law required mediation, it required each party to live up to the contract. The Abrahamic covenant, on the other hand, was dependent only on the commitment of **God**, who **is one**. Therefore, the law was inferior to the promise given to Abraham.

3:21–22. Another question is raised: Is there conflict between the law and the **promises of God**? Paul answers, **absolutely not!** The law was not given to impart life and a right standing with God. Its purpose was to reveal that **the whole world is a prisoner of sin** condemned under its judgment. Such condemnation created in mankind a need for forgiveness and release from the law's penalty—a need for forgiveness in Christ.

3:23–25. Before faith in Christ came, people **were held prisoners by the law**. In a final image, Paul conveys the purpose of the law. In the kjv the second half of this verse states that the law was given as our **tutor** (nasb more literal than niv, “was put in charge”). A better translation is “custodian” or “strict nanny.” In the Jewish culture a slave was assigned to each child to escort them to school and to assist in their supervision. This nanny was not a thirteen-year-old, sweet, little baby-sitter. This supervising nanny was more like a stern sergeant who had the bark of a German shepherd and the bite of a Doberman pincher.

Every time the child took liberties without permission on the path to school (children like to play) or did something wrong, this authoritarian nanny pointed her finger at the child and in no uncertain terms told the child what it had done wrong and delivered the punishment. By correlating the law with this nanny image, we learn that the law was given to point out sin and to threaten a great punishment if God's people didn't straighten up. Man's very inability to obey this law perfectly, and thus earn God's approval, caused men and women to long for a better way to salvation and a relationship with God—by grace. God brought hope to mankind's hopelessness in the most amazing way by sending Jesus Christ into the world. The law led **us to Christ** for forgiveness and righteousness.

**Argument 6:
Argument from the Believer's Present Position (vv.
26–29)**

Supporting Idea: *Grace appropriated through faith makes us adult children of God and unites us as brothers and sisters. The law never brought this vertical and horizontal oneness. Therefore, grace is superior to the law.*

3:26–27. By grace we are God’s adult children. Paul calls us **sons of God**. Under the law we were children. In verse 27, Paul explains how this adult sonship occurred. We were united with him through the baptism of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). This placement into the body of Christ unites all believers. In addition you **have clothed yourselves with Christ**. In Roman society, when a youth became old enough to be considered an adult, he took off his children’s clothes and put on an adult’s toga. This switch indicated that he had adult citizenship and responsibilities. In the same way, the Galatians had laid aside the old clothes of the law and had put on Christ’s new robes of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 4:23–24).

3:28. Having explained the vertical change that grace brought, now Paul shows its horizontal effect when he states **you are all one in Christ**. In Christ, human distinctions lose their significance. Regardless of race, profession, or gender, all who come to Christ must come the same way—through faith and repentance. As a result, with all distinctions erased, all believers are united in Christ. This does not mean that all distinctions are erased on the human level. A slave was still a slave in the eyes of Rome, but not in the eyes of God.

3:29. Furthermore, in Christ, believers are **Abraham's seed**. As the offspring of Abraham, we are **heirs** of the **promise** of righteousness through faith. Thus, grace is superior to the law because it unites us with God and one another in a way that the law could not.

[End of Review]

Can Anyone Help Me?

“Help,” the man cried as he dangled helplessly from the edge of the cliff. “Can anyone up there help me?”

“Yes,” answered a heavenly voice. “I’ll help you, but first you must let go.”

“Let go!” gasped the man. “But then I’d fall!”

“I’ll catch you,” replied the voice.

After a long pause, the man called out, “Can anyone else up there help me?”

Galatians 4 (NASB95)

Chapter 4

Sonship in Christ

1 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything,

2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

8 However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.

9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

10 You observe days and months and seasons and years.

11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

12 I beg of you, brethren, become as I *am*, for I also *have become as you are*. You have done me no wrong;

13 but you know that it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time;

14 and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus *Himself*.

15 Where then is that sense of blessing you had? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me.

16 So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth?

17 They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out so that you will seek them.

18 But it is good always to be eagerly sought in a commendable manner, and not only when I am present with you.

19 My children, with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you—

20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

Bond and Free

21 Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?

22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman.

23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.

24 This is allegorically speaking, for these *women* are two covenants: one *proceeding* from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar.

25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother.

27 For it is written,
“Rejoice, barren woman who does not bear;
Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor;
For more numerous are the children of the desolate
Than of the one who has a husband.”

28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.

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

30 But what does the Scripture say?
“Cast out the bondwoman and her son,
For the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman.”

31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.

Chapter 4:1-7

*Further discussion of the reason the Law was given:
It was given because the sinner is like a child in its minority, and can only be dealt with in a most elementary way.*

Verses one and two.

1 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything,
2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

Paul here continues the argument for the inferiority of the condition under law, using an illustration from contemporary life.

In order to understand his argument, we must understand the technical terms which he uses.

The first word is *child*, the translation of *nepios* (νεπίος).

The Greek word is made up of two words that together mean “one that does not speak.”

The word refers to an immature person, intellectually and morally - a minor.

This word Paul uses to describe the person under the law. He is treated as an immature person.

An adult for instance, is old enough to govern his own actions. A minor child must have restraints put upon him.



So in the spiritual world. Israel under law was treated like a minor.
The word *servant* is the next term.
The Greek word here is *doulos* (δουλος), speaking of a bonds slave.
It is the term used of a slave in a servile condition.
The minor was legally in much the same position as a slave.
He could not perform any act except through his legal representative.
This person was the guardian in the case of a minor, whose sanction was necessary for the validity of any contract undertaken in his behalf.

The word *lord* is from *kurios* (κύριος), which here is used in the sense of *owner*.

The word *tutor* is from *epitropos* (ἐπιτροπος), the word which designates the guardian of a minor orphan.

The word *governor* is from *oikonomos* (οἰκονομος), referring to a steward of one's property.

The tutor was the guardian of the child's person, the governor, the guardian of the child's property.

The words "the time appointed," are from *prothesmias* (προθεσμιας), an Athenian legal term referring to an appointed time for the termination of the minority, this time set by the father of the child.

There is an illustration of this in the case of Antiochus Euphianes who appointed Lysias to be steward of the affairs of the kingdom and guardian of his son Antiochus Eupator until a specified time, that time being when the father would resume the authority on his return.

4:1-2 Translation. Now I say, that as long as the heir is in his minority, he does not differ one bit from a slave, even though he is owner of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time previously fixed by his father.

3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

Verse three. The word we refers to Christians, Gentile and Jew.

Children is from nepios (νεπιος), the word meaning immature, thus, “when we were immature ones.”

Elements is from stoicheion (στοιχειον), which refers to any first thing from which the others belonging to some series or composite whole take their rise.

The word refers to first principles.

The word world is from kosmos (κοσμος) and is to be understood as in John 3:16; I Corinthians 6:2, 11:32, the world of humanity.

The “elements of the world” refer here therefore to the first principles of non-Christian humanity; in the case of the Jew, to the symbolic and ceremonial character of Judaism and its legal enactments, and in the case of the Gentiles, to the ceremonial and ritualistic observances of the pagan religions.

4:3 Translation. *In like manner, we also, when we were in our minority, were in a permanent state of servitude under the rudimentary first principles of mankind.*

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

Verse four. In the phrase, “the fullness of the times,” the words, “of the times” are in a construction called the objective genitive, in which the word “times” receives the action of the noun of action.

The word times, (chronos (χρονος)), refers merely to time as conceived of as a succession of moments.

The other Greek word for time, kairos (καιρος), refers to the critical epoch-making periods foreordained by God.

But the word Paul uses here refers merely to the lapse of time.

The meaning is that when that moment came which completed the period of time designated by God that should elapse before the coming of the Son of God in incarnation, then He would send forth His Son.

This point of time marked some outstanding events in the history of the human race.

First, it was the moment which God had ordained for Messiah's coming.

To Daniel was given the date of His coming, 483 years after the edict of the Medo-Persian government to rebuild Jerusalem.

Second, the Mosaic law had done its educational work, showing to the world that the most highly-favored nation on earth, the Jewish nation, was, despite all of God's blessings and mercy, totally depraved, giving the Gentile portion of the race a picture of its own totally depraved heart.

Third, the Mosaic law in its three sections, the ten commandments, the laws governing social relationships, and the Levitical system of sacrifices, was done away with as a legal system, to be superseded by the gospel of grace centering faith in an historic Saviour.

Fourth, the Roman empire maintained world peace. Roman roads made travel for missionaries easy. The universal use of the Greek language made the speedy propagation of the gospel possible. The earth-stage was all set for the greatest event in the history of the human race, the incarnation, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection of God the Son.

The word translated *sent forth* demands study. It is *exapostello* (ἐξαποστελλο).

The word *apostello* (ἀποστελλο) refers to the act of one who sends another with a commission to do something, the person sent being given credentials.

Our word *apostle* comes from it.

The prefixed preposition *apo* (ἀπο) means *from, off*.

This means that the person sent is to represent the sender.

He is his ambassador.

Our Lord is called the Apostle and High Priest of our confession in Hebrews 3:1.

But not only was our Lord sent off from the presence of the Father, but as the other prefixed preposition *ex* (ἐξ) signifies, He was sent out from His presence.

“Out from the ivory palaces, into a world of woe” came our Saviour.

Not only was He sent forth from Heaven, but He became incarnate in the human race through virgin birth, as the words “made of a woman” indicate. Not only did He become incarnate, but He was born and lived His life previous to His Cross under the Mosaic law, yes, under law as such, for the definite article is absent before the word *law* in the Greek text. He was subject to the Jewish legal economy just as any Jew was subject to it.

4:4 Translation. *But when there came the fulness of the time, God sent off His Son, woman born, made subject to law.*

5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

Verse five. The word redeem is from *exagorazo* (ἐξαγοράζω) “to buy out of the slave market.”

The word law is not preceded by the definite article, hence law in general is referred to here.

Paul conceived of the Gentiles as possessing a law, and that law being of divine origin.

He speaks of the law written in the hearts of the Gentiles. (Rom. 2:14, 15).

This law written upon the Gentile heart could easily become externalized and be made into a legalistic system. In I Corinthians 9:20, Paul refers first to the Jews, and then to those who are under the law, including in the second expression, anyone who was living under a system of legalism, Jew or Gentile.

The Lord Jesus was born under the law, lived under the law, and died under the penalty of the law which we broke, and in paying our penalty, He delivered us from any claims which the law had against us.

He died under law, and in His resurrection, was raised into a realm where law as a legalistic system does not exist.

This He did, in order that He might not only deliver us from the law but also raise believers with Himself into a realm where law does not operate.

Instead therefore of being children (immature ones, *nepios* (νεπιος)) under law, we became adult sons (*huios* (υίος)) under grace. We received the adoption of sons.

This expression in the Greek is literally, “in order that we might receive the adult son-placing.”

We could paraphrase it “in order that we might be placed as adult sons.”

Thus, we have presented to us the status of a person under grace as compared to that of a person under law. The latter is in his minority, the former in his majority, the latter treated like a minor, the former like an adult.

4:5 Translation. *In order that He might deliver those under law, in order that we might receive the placing as adult sons.*

6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Verse six. The phrase "because ye are sons," gives the reason for God's act of sending the Holy Spirit to take up His permanent residence in the hearts of the Galatians. The act of the Spirit in placing the Galatian believers as adult sons of God, is the first and objective step which the preceding context has spoken of.

This brought about their release from the position of minors under law, and placed them in the position of adult sons.

The bestowal of the Holy Spirit gave the Galatians a consciousness of the filial relationship between themselves as sons of God and God their Father.

Instead of looking upon God as a Judge, they could now look upon Him as their Father with whom they have the privilege of living as His sons.

The fact of their possession of the indwelling Spirit was enough to demonstrate to the Galatians that they were no longer under law, but under grace.

The word *crying*, from *krazo* (κραζο), signifies “a loud and earnest cry,” or “a public announcement.”

See Matthew 9:27, Acts 14:14, Romans 9:27, John 7:28, 37.

In the LXX it is often used of prayer addressed to God (Ps. 3:4, 107:13).

It emphasizes the earnestness and intensity of the Holy Spirit's utterance in the Christian.

The word itself does not convey the idea of joy, but the intensity of the Spirit's utterance in this case must include a joyous note.

The word *crying* is, in the Greek text, associated with the word *Spirit*, so that it is the Spirit who is doing the crying.

He cries *Abba*.

The word *pater* (πατερ) (father) is the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic word *Abba*.

Aramaic is the language which the Jews spoke in Palestine in the first century.

Paul translates the word *Abba* for his Greek readers who were not acquainted with Aramaic.

It is possible that the use of the name *Abba* was derived from the Lord Jesus. When reporting in Greek the word Jesus used, His hearers would use the Aramaic *Abba* with a sort of affectionate fondness as the very term Jesus used to express the wonderful thought of filial relationship to God.

4:6 Translation. *And because you are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts crying Abba, my Father.*

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

Verse seven. In the fact of the Galatian's possession of the Spirit, Paul finds the proof that they are adult sons of God.

The emphasis is still upon the fact that their position as sons gives them freedom from bondage to the law, for he says that they are no longer slaves (doulos (δουλος)).

It is also implied by the use of the words "no longer," that at one time the Galatians were under bondage to law.

The change from the plural sons to the singular son brings the matter of sonship closer home to each individual reader.

As a son, Paul says, the believer is an heir of God. The purpose of the apostle in again bringing up the conceptions of heirship and inheritance is perhaps that he wants to remind the Galatians that their position as heirs of God is due, not to any personal merit or good works, but to the grace of God.

Thus, the Galatians are reminded that it is not through coming under law, but in maintaining their freedom from it that they will be able to obtain the blessing of Abraham, which blessing the Judaizers had held before their eyes as a prize obtainable only through circumcision.

Paul appeals to them to retain the status of adult sons under grace which they already possessed, rather than go back to the position of a minor and a slave under law.

4:7 Translation. *So that no longer are you a slave but a son, and since (you are) a son, (you are) also an heir through God.*

Yet the Galatians are determined to return to their former position as minors and slaves under law (4:8–11).

8 However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.

Verse eight. The apostle speaks of the former gods which the Galatian Gentiles worshipped (Acts 14:9–18). He thinks of them as realities, calling the gods of the pagan world *demons* (I Cor. 8:5, 6, 10:19, 20; Col. 2:15).

The words “did service” are from *douloō* (δουλοο), the kindred verb to *doulos* (δουλος), a slave.

The Galatians were slaves of these deities, in bondage under a system of legalism.

He grants them objective existence, but denies that they are gods by nature.

The word *nature* is from *phusis* (φύσις) which means, “that which belongs to a person or thing by virtue of its origin,” then, “its essential character.”

It is used even of the divine nature which is without origin.

Paul does not deny their existence, but their deity.

Yet while the apostle did not think of them as deity by nature, yet at the same time he did not class them as being of mere mundane matter.

They belonged to a world not human but demoniac, a point which must have been well known to the Galatians from Paul's oral instruction.

4:8 Translation. *But at that time in fact, not knowing God, ye were in a slave's bondage to the gods which are not gods by nature.*

9 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

Verse nine. The expression “known by God,” cannot refer merely to knowledge simply in a purely theocratic or intellectual sense, since the apostle must have regarded such knowledge by God as an ever present fact.

The phrase must refer to God knowing the Galatians in a saving way.

For this use see Psalm 1:6, Nahum 1:7, I Corinthians 8:3, Matthew 7:23.

Paul adds the phrase, “or rather are known of God” to the phrase “after that ye have known God,” for the following reasons.

It is to remind the Galatians that they do not owe their knowledge of God to themselves, but to Him.

Their escape from idolatry and bondage to law was not effected by any knowledge they acquired of God, but by God coming to know them in a saving way.

Hence, they should clearly see the folly and wrong of abandoning this advantageous position to take an inferior one from which they had been rescued.

Eadie says in this connection, “God knew them ere they knew Him, and His knowing them was the cause of their knowing Him.”

Dean Stanley remarks that “Our knowledge of God is more His act than ours.”

If God knows a man, that means that an activity of God has passed over to man, so that the man, as the subject of God’s knowledge, enters into the knowledge of God.

The Greek word translated know here is ginosko (γινωσκει), which in the New Testament often implies a personal relation between the knower and the known.

The word *how* is from *pos* (πως), rather, “how is it possible?”

It is, as Bengel says, a question full of wonder.

The apostle could hardly conceive of such a thing as a believer, having been once rescued from abject slavery to demons in a pagan religion, returning to a human system of bondage.

The word *turn* is present in tense, “How is it possible that you are turning?”

They were in the act of turning away from grace to law while Paul was writing this letter.

The question, “How is it possible that you are turning back again to the weak and beggarly rudimentary things to which ye desire to be in bondage again?” is a rhetorical one, the purpose of which is to show the absurdity of their actions.

It also calls the attention of the Galatians to the ineffectualness and poverty of their old religious system, contrasted to the power and richness of the gospel.

It is of course a perverted form of Judaism to which they were turning, but pagan religions are included in Paul’s thought as just as ineffectual.

Both were legalistic in character, and were without a dynamic to make actual the realization of ethical principles in the life.

The words *again* are from *palin* (παλιν) and *anōthen* (ἀνωθεν) respectively, Greek synonyms meaning *again*. The first refers to a repetition of an act.

The second speaks of the repetition of an act, that repetition having the same source as the first act. In other words, in the second word there is a return to a former position.

The Galatians, in turning to a system of legalism, would be returning to their former position under law.

The word *anōthen* (ἀνωθεν) not only refers to the act of returning to a former position, but of returning to the beginning.

These Galatians would be going back to the elementary beginning principles of religious thought. When Paul speaks of the rudimentary forms of religion, calling them weak and beggarly, he shows the utter impotence of these to do and bestow what was done and bestowed by God in grace. They are weak in that they have no power to rescue men from condemnation. They are beggarly, since they bring no rich endowment of spiritual blessings.

Up to this point, Paul has spoken with respect to the education given to the world by the social habits, institutions, and laws of the Greco-Roman world. Through this education, civilized man learnt much in the sphere of morals and natural religion which would bear comparison with the progress of Israel under the ethics of the Mosaic law. But when he compares the mechanical routine of formal religious ceremonies which were found in the pagan religions and among so-called religious Jews, with the spiritual teachings and dynamics of the gospel, he does not hesitate to call them weak and beggarly.

Lightfoot has a most illuminating note on this matter which is so valuable that we quote it in its entirety. “It is clear however from the context, that the apostle is not speaking of the Jewish race alone, but of the heathen world also before Christ—not of the Mosaic law only, but of all forms of law which might be subservient to the same purpose. This appears from his including his Galatian hearers under the same tutelage. Nor is this fact to be explained by supposing them to have passed through a stage of Jewish proselytism on their way to Christianity.

St. Paul distinctly refers to their previous idolatrous worship (verse 8), and no less distinctly and emphatically does he describe their adoption of Jewish ritualism, as a *return* to the weak and beggarly discipline of childhood, from which they had been emancipated when they abandoned that worship. “But how, we may ask, could St. Paul class in the same category that divinely ordained law which he elsewhere describes as ‘holy’ and ‘just’ and ‘good’ (Rom. 7:12), and those degraded heathen systems which he elsewhere reprobates as ‘fellowship with devils’²¹ (I Cor. 10:20)?

“The answer seems to be that the apostle here regards the higher elements in heathen religions as corresponding, however imperfectly, to the lower element in the Mosaic law.

For we may consider both the one and the other as made up of two component parts, the *spiritual* and the *ritualistic*.

“Now viewed in their *spiritual* aspect, there is no comparison between the one and the other.

In this respect the heathen religions, so far as they added anything of their own to that sense of dependence upon God which is innate in man and which they could not entirely crush (Acts 14:17, 17:23, 27 and 28; Rom. 1:19 and 20), were wholly bad; they were profligate and soul-destroying, were the prompting of devils.

On the contrary, in the Mosaic law, the spiritual element was most truly divine.

But this does not enter into our reckoning here, for Christianity has appropriated all that was spiritual in its predecessor.

The Mosaic dispensation was a foreshadowing, a germ of the gospel: and thus, when Christ came, its spiritual element was of necessity extinguished or rather absorbed by its successor.

Deprived of this, it was a mere mass of lifeless ordinances, differing only in degree, not in kind, from any other ritualistic system.

“Thus the *ritualistic* element alone remains to be considered, and here is the meeting point of Judaism and Heathenism.

In Judaism this was as much lower than its spiritual element, as in Heathenism it was higher.

Hence the two systems approach within such a distance of each other that they can under certain limitations be classed together.

They have at least so much in common that a lapse into Judaism can be regarded as a relapse to the position of unconverted Heathenism.

Judaism was a system of bondage like Heathenism. Heathenism had been a disciplinary training like Judaism.

“It is a fair inference, I think, from St. Paul’s language here, that he does place Heathenism in the same category with Judaism in this last respect. Both alike are *stoicheia* (στοιχαια), ‘elementary systems of training.’ They had at least this in common, that as ritual systems they were made up of precepts and ordinances, and thus were representatives of ‘law’ as opposed to ‘grace,’ ‘promise,’ that is, as opposed to the gospel. Doubtless in this respect the highest form of heathen religion was much lower and less efficient than the Mosaic ritual.

But still in an imperfect way they might do the same work: they might act as a restraint which, multiplying transgressions, and thus begetting and cherishing a conviction of sin, prepared the way for the liberty of manhood in Christ.”

4:9 Translation. *But now having come to know God, indeed rather having become known by God, how is it possible that you are turning back again to the weak and beggarly rudimentary principles to which ye are bent on again being in bondage?*

10 You observe days and months and seasons and years.
Verse ten. The days, months, and years which the Galatians were observing, were those which the Mosaic law required Israel to observe.

This is made clear by Paul's statement in 4:21, to the effect that the Galatians are bent on being under law.

From 5:1 it is clear that the Galatians had not yet adopted circumcision, and from 5:3, that they had not been asked to adopt the whole law as yet.

This shows that the Judaizers had pursued the adroit course of presenting to them only part of the requirements of the Mosaic law, those parts which might be least repulsive to them as Gentiles.

Having gotten them to adopt the festivals and perhaps the fast days, the Judaizers were now urging them to adopt circumcision.

The word *observe* is from *paratereo* (παρατερο). The word denotes careful, scrupulous observance, an intent watching lest any of the prescribed seasons be overlooked.

A merely legal or ritualistic system of religion always develops such scrupulousness.

Paul, a former Pharisee, was well acquainted with the meticulous care with which the Pharisees kept all the appointed feasts and fasts.

It hurt him to see these Gentile Christians being drawn into the net of the Judaizers, and enslaved by a mere formal, lifeless ritual.

The *days* probably refer to the Sabbath days and to the feasts which were observed just for a day.

The *months* refer to the monthly recurring events (Isaiah 66:23), or to the seventh month (Numbers 29). The reference also could have to do with the celebration of the appearance of the new moon (Numbers 10:10, 28:11).

Times refers to the celebrations not limited to a single day, such as the Passover, Feast of Tabernacles, and to the feasts of the fourth, fifth, and seventh months (II Chron. 8:13).

Years may have reference to the year of Jubilee or the Sabbatical year.

4:10 Translation. *Days ye are scrupulously and religiously observing, and months, and seasons, and years.*

11 I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

Verse eleven. Martin Luther said of this verse, “These words of Paul breathe tears.”

The construction in the Greek does not give the impression that the apostle has fears about the future of the Galatians which may not be realized.

It is clear that he suspects that what he fears has already happened.

Paul was not apprehensive with respect to his own interests or his fruitless labors, but with respect to the spiritual welfare of his Galatian converts.

They were the objects of his anxiety.

The word *labour* is from *kopiao* (κοπιῶ) which means “to labor to the point of exhaustion.”

It is in the perfect tense, indicating the finished, thorough piece of work Paul had done in the evangelization of the Galatians.

4:11 Translation. *I am afraid about you lest perhaps in vain I have labored to the point of exhaustion for you.*