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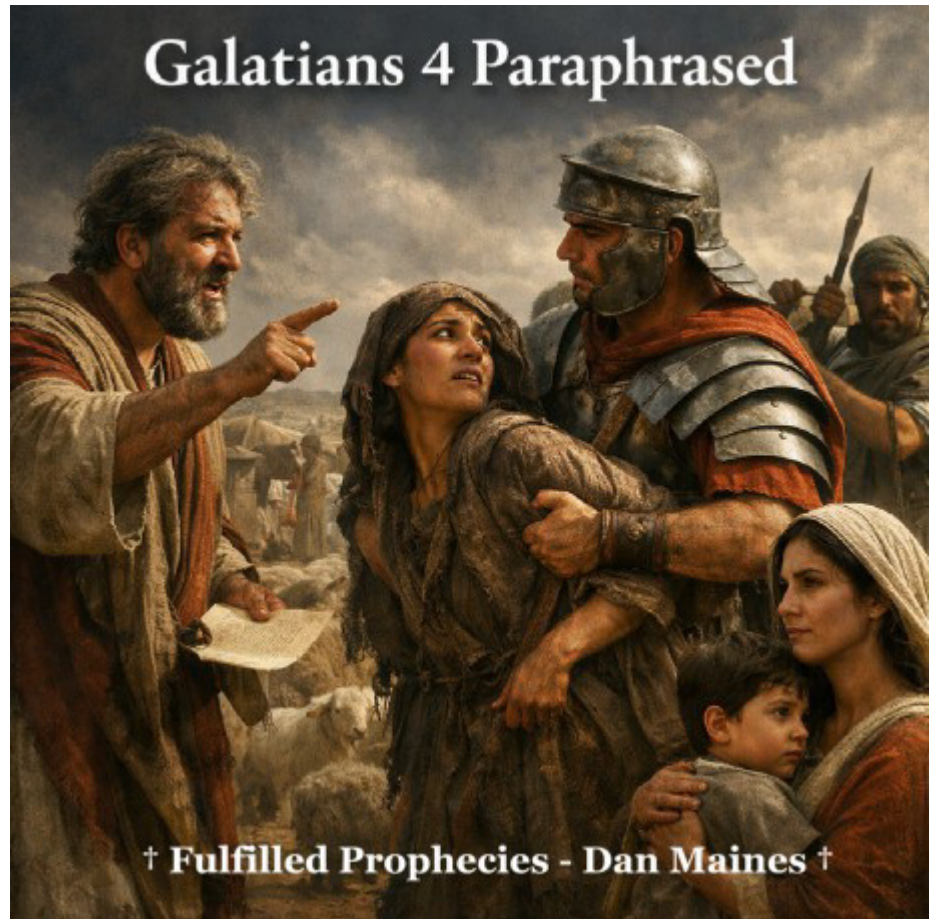
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Galatians 4 Paraphrased



By Dan Maines

Galatians 4 Paraphrased

Introduction

† Paul explains the difference between living under the Law and living as sons through Christ.

† Before Christ came people were like children under guardians, but through Christ believers receive adoption and inheritance.

† Paul then uses the story of Hagar and Sarah to explain the difference between bondage and freedom.

Galatians 4:1

What I'm saying is this, as long as the heir is still a child he isn't different from a servant even though everything belongs to him.

† Israel under the Law was like a child who hadn't yet come into the inheritance promised to Abraham (Galatians 3:24).

† The promises existed but the full freedom had not yet arrived.

† The Law restrained and supervised until the appointed time.

Galatians 4:2

Instead he's placed under guardians and managers until the time set by his father arrives.

† The Mosaic covenant acted as a guardian system over Israel's life.

† God set the time when maturity would come through Christ (Romans 5:6).

† The inheritance was always planned but the time of fulfillment had not yet arrived.

Galatians 4:3

In the same way when we were children we were held in bondage under the basic principles of the world.

† The elementary principles refer to the regulations and rituals of the old covenant system.

† These systems pointed forward to Christ but couldn't give true freedom (Colossians 2:20).

† They kept people spiritually immature until the gospel was revealed.

Galatians 4:4

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

† Christ entered history at the exact moment God planned.

† Being born under the Law meant He lived fully within the covenant system Israel was under.

† He fulfilled the Law completely (Matthew 5:17).

Galatians 4:5

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

† Redemption means being released from the authority of the old covenant system.

† Through Christ believers moved from servant status to sonship (Romans 8:15).

† Adoption describes a new relationship with God based on grace.

Galatians 4:6

Because you are sons God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying out Abba Father.

† The Spirit confirms the believer's relationship with God.

† Abba Father expresses closeness and personal access to God.

† This was very different from the distant structure of the Law.

Galatians 4:7

So you are no longer a servant but a son and if a son then an heir through God.

† Believers no longer live under the slavery of the Law covenant.

† Being heirs means sharing in the promises given through Christ.

† The inheritance is based on God's promise not human effort.

Galatians 4:8

However at that time when you didn't know God you were slaves to those which by nature are not gods.

† The Galatians once lived in pagan idolatry before hearing the gospel.

† Paul reminds them of their past so they recognize the freedom they now have.

† Returning to legalism would only create another form of slavery.

Galatians 4:9

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 principles you want to be enslaved to all over again.

† The phrase known by God emphasizes God's initiative in salvation.

† Paul warns that returning to legalistic systems is a step backward.

† The Law was never meant to give life but to point toward Christ.

Galatians 4:10

You carefully observe days and months and seasons and years.

† These observances refer to the Jewish calendar system of holy days and festivals.

† Such rituals belonged to the old covenant order.

† Trusting them for righteousness misunderstands the gospel.

Galatians 4:11

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

† Paul's concern is that the Galatians might abandon the gospel message.

† Legalism would make his teaching appear wasted.

† The gospel centers on faith in Christ not ritual obedience.

Galatians 4:12

I urge you brothers become like me because I also became like you you haven't wronged me.

† Paul had lived under the Law but now lived free from it.

† He's urging them to live in that same freedom.

† The issue wasn't personal offense but spiritual direction.

Galatians 4:13

You know that it was because of a bodily illness that I first preached the gospel to you.

† Paul's weakness became the opportunity for the gospel to reach them.

† God often works through human weakness to reveal His power.

† The message mattered more than Paul's condition.

Galatians 4:14

What was a trial to you in my physical condition you didn't despise or reject instead you welcomed me as an angel of God as Christ Jesus Himself.

† The Galatians originally received Paul with deep respect.

† They recognized the authority of the message he carried.

† This makes their present rejection even more troubling.

Galatians 4:15

Where then is that sense of blessing you had because I testify that if possible you would have torn out your own eyes and given them to me.

† Their earlier devotion showed genuine spiritual joy.

† Paul's statement may reflect an illness affecting his eyes.

† Legalistic teaching had begun to destroy their earlier enthusiasm.

Galatians 4:16

So have I become your enemy by telling you the truth.

† Truth often brings resistance when it exposes error.

† Paul refuses to compromise the gospel to maintain popularity.

† Faithfulness to truth sometimes creates conflict.

Galatians 4:17

Those people are eager to win you over but not for good purposes they want to exclude you so that you will seek them.

† The false teachers wanted influence and followers.

† Their strategy involved separating believers from Paul's teaching.

† Religious control often depends on creating dependency.

Galatians 4:18

It's good to be sought after for a good purpose always and not only when I'm present with you.

† Paul isn't against enthusiasm for spiritual leadership.

† The problem lies in motives and truthfulness.

† True leaders point people to Christ rather than themselves.

Galatians 4:19

My children with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you.

† Paul compares spiritual growth to childbirth.

† His desire is that Christ's character shape their lives.

† Spiritual maturity requires transformation within.

Galatians 4:20

I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone because I'm perplexed about you.

† Paul's words show deep concern for their direction.

† Distance prevents him from guiding them directly.

† Their confusion over the gospel troubles him.

Galatians 4:21

Tell me you who want to be under the Law do you not listen to what the Law says.

† Paul challenges those wanting to return to the Law.

† Ironically the Law itself reveals its limitations.

† Understanding scripture correctly leads to Christ.

Galatians 4:22

It is written that Abraham had two sons one by the slave woman and one by the free woman.

† Paul introduces the story of Hagar and Sarah from Genesis.

† These two women illustrate two covenant systems.

† The story becomes a symbolic lesson about bondage and freedom.

Galatians 4:23

The son of the slave woman was born according to the flesh but the son of the free woman through promise.

† Ishmael represented human effort and natural birth.

† Isaac represented God's promise and supernatural fulfillment.

† Paul uses this contrast to explain covenant differences.

Galatians 4:24

These things are symbolic because the women represent two covenants one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves she is Hagar.

† Mount Sinai represents the covenant of the Law.

† That covenant produced a system of obligation and bondage.

† The Law exposed sin but didn't bring ultimate freedom.

Galatians 4:25

Now Hagar represents Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem because she is in slavery with her children.

† The earthly Jerusalem represented the old covenant system.

† That system was still operating when Paul wrote this letter.

† It symbolized spiritual bondage under the Law.

Galatians 4:26

But the Jerusalem above is free she is our mother.

† The heavenly Jerusalem represents the new covenant people of God.

† This describes the spiritual community formed through Christ.

† Freedom replaces the bondage of the former covenant.

Galatians 4:27

Because it is written rejoice barren woman who does not bear

break forth and shout you who are not in labor because the children of the desolate woman are more than those of the one who has a husband.

† Paul quotes Isaiah to show God's promise of a greater covenant family.

† The new covenant would produce a worldwide community.

† The promise extended far beyond national Israel.

Galatians 4:28

Now you brothers like Isaac are children of promise.

† Believers inherit the promise given to Abraham.

† Their identity is rooted in God's promise not in Law observance.

† Faith places them in the same category as Isaac.

Galatians 4:29

But just as at that time the one born according to the flesh persecuted the one born according to the Spirit so it is now also.

† Ishmael mocked Isaac in the historical account.

† Paul compares this to persecution of believers.

† Conflict often appears between law based religion and grace.

Galatians 4:30

But what does the scripture say cast out the slave woman and her son because the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.

† The two covenant systems cannot share the same inheritance.

† The old covenant system was temporary and passing away.

† The promise is fulfilled through Christ.

Galatians 4:31

So then brothers we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman.

† Paul's conclusion is that believers belong to the covenant of freedom.

† Their identity comes from promise not law.

† This prepares the way for Paul's call to stand firm in freedom.

Historical References

† Irenaeus wrote that Paul's teaching about the two covenants showed the transition from the Law to the freedom found in Christ.

† Clement of Alexandria explained that the story of Hagar and Sarah revealed the deeper spiritual meaning within Israel's history.

† Eusebius recorded that early Christians saw these passages as evidence that the gospel fulfilled the Law's purpose.

How it applies to us today

† The gospel reminds believers that righteousness doesn't come through religious systems but through Christ.

† Returning to legalism replaces freedom with spiritual bondage.

† Living as sons means trusting God's promise rather than human performance.

Q & A Appendix

Q What does Paul mean by adoption as sons

A Adoption describes believers receiving full status as God's children through Christ (Romans 8:15)

Q Why does Paul compare Hagar and Sarah

A He uses their story to illustrate the difference between the covenant of Law and the covenant of promise

Q What does the Jerusalem above represent

A It represents the new covenant people of God (Hebrews 12:22)

Q Why does Paul warn the Galatians about observing days and

seasons

A Because relying on ritual observances returns people to the bondage of the old covenant system (Colossians 2:16-17)

Q What is Paul's main message in this chapter

A Believers belong to the covenant of promise and must live in the freedom given through Christ (Galatians 5:1)

† This is the fulfilled perspective we proclaim at Fulfilled Prophecies †

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Source Index

† Galatians 4

† Irenaeus, Against Heresies

† Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History

† Clement of Alexandria, Stromata

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