

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT COMES FROM GOD AND IS BY FAITH

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A correct understanding of the Bible's doctrine of 'Righteousness by faith' is essential because what we believe about this doctrine will determine our success or failure in the Christian life. The Apostle Paul describes how important this truth is in the following verse.

Philippians 3:8-9. "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." NASB

In this verse the Apostle Paul explains that the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith is the greatest asset a person can have. He counted all other things rubbish when compared with this gift. Often the expression 'Righteousness by faith' is used, but this is simply a contraction of the term "the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith". But what is the meaning of the word '*righteousness?*'

Galatians 3:21, "Is the law therefore opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law". NET

Paul clearly equates righteousness with the giving of life and the covenant promises of God. If any law was capable of giving life then God's law could. But not even God's law is capable of imparting life or Righteousness to a person who obeys it. By examining the covenant promises of God, we gain an understanding of the meaning of the word 'righteousness' as it applies to us.

Hebrews 10:15-17, "And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us, for after saying, 16 *"This is the covenant that I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put my laws on their hearts and I will inscribe them on their minds."* 17 then he says, *"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no longer."* NET

Two covenant promises are clearly brought to view here. The first covenant promise (known as Sanctification) begins with a complete surrender of the mind. It is being made a law-keeping person by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. The second covenant promise (known as justification) is a declaration of innocence. The first promise makes us fit to enter heaven, the second promise legally entitles us to enter heaven. God requires the surrender of the entire mind before justification can take place.

What law is written on the heart according to the first new covenant promise?

2 Corinth 3:2-3 "You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone, 3 revealing that you are a letter of Christ, delivered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tablets but on tablets of human hearts." NET

According to Paul, the law that was written on tablets of stone is written on our hearts by the Spirit of God. ie, the ten commandments. (Exodus 34:28, 34:1) Therefore a part of the New Covenant is to make we Christians obedient to the Ten Commandments. The Spirit of God writes the Ten Commandments on our hearts so that it becomes a part of our character. But doesn't Paul say that we are not under the law but under Grace?

Romans 6:15-16. "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Absolutely not! 16 Do you not know that if you present yourselves as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or obedience resulting in righteousness?" NET

Galatians 5:18. "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law." NET

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Notice the parallel that Paul makes here

Under Law	Led by the Spirit
Under Law	Under Grace
slave	slave
sin (the transgression of the law)	obedience
death	Righteousness - (immortality)

It can be seen here easily that for Paul to be under law is to be a slave of sin that leads to eternal death. To be under grace is to be a slave of obedience to the law that leads to righteousness - the opposite of death. A person who is saved by grace will be redeemed from every lawless deed, meaning that he will cease to willfully sin and will obey God's law. From the right hand column we clearly see the Holy Spirit, the Grace of God and obedience to the law of God are inseparable. It's like having a loaf of bread and trying to separate the yeast from the flour. It cannot be done.

Righteousness, the 4 covenant promises of God, are these:

(1) Being made a commandment keeper by the Holy Spirit.
(2) To be declared legally innocent in the sight of God.
(3) Being made immortal at the second advent of Christ.
(4) Establishing the Kingdom of God on Earth.

The idea that righteousness means to be 'made immortal' is also clearly brought out in a parallel between Romans 8:23-24 and Galatians 5:5.

Romans 8:23-24 "...we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the **Spirit**, groan inwardly as we **wait eagerly** for our **adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies**. 24 For in this **hope** we were saved...." NIV

Galatians 5:5 "For through the **Spirit** we **eagerly await** by faith the **righteousness** for which we **hope**." NIV

Here are the above terms in juxtaposition :

Romans 8:23-24	Galatians 5:5
Spirit	Spirit
wait eagerly	eagerly await
<i>the redemption of our bodies</i>	<i>Righteousness</i>
hope	hope

These verses indicate that righteousness includes the gift of immortality ie, the redemption of our bodies, at the return of Christ. The redemption of our bodies or Righteousness is also known as Glorification. It is interesting to note that all of Paul's terms and metaphors have a present and a future tense.

Present Tense

Future Tense

<u>Redemption</u> Col 1:14 "We have redemption - the forgiveness of sins"	<u>Redemption</u> Rom 8:23 "The redemption of our bodies"
<u>Salvation</u> 2 Cor 6:2 "Now is the day of salvation"	<u>Salvation</u> Romans 13:11 "salvation is nearer now than when we first believed"
<u>Righteousness</u> Rom 3:22 "Righteousness from God comes to all who believe."	<u>Righteousness</u> Gal 5:5 "We eagerly await the righteousness for which we hope"

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It seems clear that the above expressions are all interchangeable; that Righteousness, Redemption, Salvation, Adoption all refer to the same thing, ie. the covenant promises of God. When Paul uses these metaphors applying them to the present life, he is using them in the sense of our spiritual life, and our legal standing before God. When the same metaphors are used applying to the future at the return of Christ, he is referring to our physical redemption of our bodies from this earth.

We are saved under a covenant comprising of three promises. The covenant is a package deal. If God forgives you your sins, He will take you to heaven. God will not have you declared innocent without guaranteeing you a place in heaven. When you decide you want salvation, you have elected to have all three covenant promises fulfilled in your life. You cannot choose one or two, and leave another one out. You must choose all three or none at all. So when you choose to have your sins forgiven, you've also chosen to live forever in heaven with God. And you've also chosen to go through the sanctification process. That is, to be made into a commandment keeping person through the power of the Holy Spirit. Any person who consistently and wilfully violates any one of the Ten Commandments has indicated that they don't want to be made into a commandment keeping person. Such a person is resisting the Holy Spirit, has rejected the New Covenant and as a result, has rejected not only the sanctification process, but forgiveness and immortality as well.

As usual, Satan, the devil, with well matured plans like a skillful General, is always ready to deceive and to destroy any person who looks like they are escaping from his deceptions. Satan has devised a deception to destroy those people who are endeavoring to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. This deception has been unmasked by the Apostle Paul so that we can avoid being trapped. If you consider yourself to be a faithful Christian, if you are endeavoring to obey God and to do what is right, then beware - because this satanic trap has been laid for you. The Jews were deceived by it, the early Christian church was beginning to be deceived by it, and many Christians today are being deceived by it.

This deceptive heresy teaches that the covenant promises of God are fulfilled by our obedience to the law, instead of through the Grace of God. To believe that obedience to the law is the medium through which a person obtains salvation from God is totally wrong. Salvation is obtained by accepting Christ's New Covenant. A Covenant that was made for us by His life, bought for us by His death, and made workable by His resurrection and by His High Priestly ministry.

Explaining the Deception - the Galatian Problem.

Romans 8:3-4 "For God achieved what the law could not do because it was weakened through the flesh. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and concerning sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 so that the righteous requirement of the law may be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." NET

Here Paul gives us two reasons for the incarnation. The Son of God became man according to these verses so that as a sin offering the guilt and debt that man owes to God was paid in full by Christ. The second reason for the incarnation is that man who lives by the Spirit of God can fully obey the righteous requirements of the law. This is what salvation is. The law of God reveals to us what sin is but because we have sinful natures the law is powerless to transform man into the likeness of God. It takes the Holy Spirit to transform man into the likeness of God.

Galatians 3:1-5 "You foolish Galatians! Who has cast a spell on you? Before your eyes Jesus Christ was vividly portrayed as crucified! 2 The only thing I want to learn from you is this: Did you receive the Spirit by doing the works of the law or by believing what you heard? 3 Are you so foolish? Although you began with the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by human effort?" NET

The Galatians were taught by Paul that the Spirit of God fulfills the promises of salvation. But they became deceived by false teachers who taught that human effort in obeying the law was the means of fulfilling the promises of salvation. Paul was clear that the law is only an educator, it cannot fulfill the promises of God.

Galatians 2:21 "I do not set aside God's grace, because if righteousness could come through the law, then Christ died for nothing!" NET

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Galatians 3:10 “For all who rely on doing the works of the law are under a curse...” NET (ie. those who are relying on obedience to the law for the fulfilment of the covenant promises)

Galatians 3:21-22; “Is the law therefore opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that was able to give life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. **22** But the scripture imprisoned everything under sin so that the promise could be given—because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ—to those who believe.” NET

The covenant promises of God (Righteousness) are given to us because of our faith in Jesus Christ. Paul here also equates righteousness with life. The law is not opposed to the promises of God its just that the law cannot fulfil those promises. These promises are given to us by God to redeem us from the prison of Sin. Sins guilt, sins power, and sins presence. Imagine the Apostle Paul deep in thought wondering how he could present the truth clearly and forcefully. What Paul came up with was a brilliant allegory that shows how promises (covenants) are fulfilled, and what is acceptable to God and what is not acceptable to God. To do this, Paul uses an event that took place in the life of the Patriarch Abraham. Paul writes to the deceived Christians of Galatia:

An Appeal from Allegory

Galatians 4:21-5:1 “21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not understand the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 But one, the son by the slave woman, was born by natural descent, while the other, the son by the free woman, was born through the promise. 24 These things may be treated as an allegory, for these women represent two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai bearing children for slavery; this is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar represents 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, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written: “**Rejoice, O barren woman who does not bear children; break forth and shout, you who have no birth pains, because the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than those of the woman who has a husband.**” 28 But you, brothers and sisters, are children of the promise like Isaac. 29 But just as at that time the one born by natural descent persecuted the one born according to the Spirit, so it is now. 30 But what does the scripture say? “**Throw out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman will not share the inheritance with the son**” of the free woman. 31 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman. 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not be subject again to the yoke of slavery.” NET

Let’s look at the Old Testament and find out the background to this story to gain a clearer understanding of what Paul is talking about. Consider Abraham.

Genesis 15:1-6. “After these things the Lord’s message came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram! I am your shield and the one who will reward you in great abundance.” 2 But Abram said, “O Sovereign Lord, what will you give me since I continue to be childless, and my heir is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 Abram added, “Since you have not given me a descendant, then look, one born in my house will be my heir!” 4 But look, the Lord’s message came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but instead a son who comes from your own body will be your heir.” 5 The Lord took him outside and said, “Gaze into the sky and count the stars—if you are able to count them!” Then he said to him, “So will your descendants be.” 6 Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord credited it as righteousness to him.” NET

Abram wanted a son of his own to be the heir of his household when he died. But Abram had no children of his own and it didn’t look as though he ever would have them. Sarai, Abram’s wife, was barren from her youth. So, Abram despaired of being childless. The discouraging thought to Abram was that one of his own servants would inherit his estate. God came to Abram in a vision and told him he would have a son of his own to be his heir. Not only would he have an heir, but his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky. This was God’s covenant promise to Abram. Abram’s belief that God would fulfil this promise is righteousness by faith.

Gen 16:1-2 “Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had not given birth to any children, but she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, “Since the Lord

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has prevented me from having children, please sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have a family by her.” Abram did what Sarai told him.” NET

There came a time in the life of Abram that he lost his faith in God's promise and instead listened to the voice of his wife. By doing this, Abram attempted to fulfil God's promise by himself. This is an attempt at Righteousness - by works, ie Trying to fulfil God's promises by human effort.

Gen 16:15-16 “So Hagar gave birth to Abram's son, whom Abram named Ishmael. 16 (Now Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar gave birth to Ishmael.)” NET

About 12 years later when Abram was 99 God appeared to him again.

Gen 17:1-9. “When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, “I am the Sovereign God. Walk before me and be blameless. 2 Then I will confirm my covenant between me and you, and I will give you a multitude of descendants.” 3 Abram bowed down with his face to the ground, and God said to him, 4 “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer will your name be Abram. Instead, your name will be Abraham because I will make you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you extremely fruitful. I will make nations of you, and kings will descend from you. 7 I will confirm my covenant as a perpetual covenant between me and you. It will extend to your descendants after you throughout their generations. I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you. 8 I will give the whole land of Canaan—the land where you are now residing—to you and your descendants after you as a permanent possession. I will be their God.” 9 Then God said to Abraham, “As for you, you must keep the covenantal requirement I am imposing on you and your descendants after you throughout their generations.” NET

At 99 years of age God remakes his covenant promise with Abram. Abram only wanted one son, but God says I will make you a father of many nations. This is an indication of God's benevolent kindness towards his people. It is his pleasure to do more for us than we ask of Him. Ishmael was 12 years old at this time, but was unaccepted by God as a fulfillment of the original covenant promise. (see v18-21). God specifically told Abraham that the covenant would be established with the birth of a son through his barren wife Sarai.

Circumcision – God fulfils his covenant promises not me

Gen 17:10-11 “This is my requirement that you and your descendants after you must keep: Every male among you must be circumcised. 11 You must circumcise the flesh of your foreskins. This will be a reminder of the covenant between me and you.” NET

As an everlasting reminder of his loss of faith and his attempt to fulfil God's promise by himself in procreating Ishmael, Abraham was ordered to perform the ceremony of circumcision. This ceremony seems to have been a sign that Abraham realised that laying with Hagar and procreating Ishmael was attempting righteousness (fulfilling God's covenant promises) by his own works. This was shown to be a failure and that he now accepted the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. Every time Abraham saw that his forsaken was missing it would remind him of 'wrong woman wrong baby [Ishmael], right woman right baby [Isaac]'. ie God fulfils his promises not me.

Romans 4:11 “And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith...” NET

Paul tells us that circumcision is a sign of Righteousness by faith.

Righteousness by faith - God fulfils his covenant promises not me

A short time after God re-established His covenant with Abraham, three angels appeared to him on the plains of Mamre on their mission to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. While passing by they gave Abraham some good news.

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Gen 18:9-14 “Then they asked him, “Where is Sarah your wife?” He replied, “There, in the tent.” 10 One of them said, “I will surely return to you when the season comes round again, and your wife Sarah will have a son!” (Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, not far behind him. 11 Abraham and Sarah were old and advancing in years; Sarah had long since passed menopause.) 12 So Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, “After I am worn out will I have pleasure, especially when my husband is old too?” 13 The Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child when I am old?’ 14 Is anything impossible for the Lord? I will return to you when the season comes round again and Sarah will have a son.” NET

Gen 21:1-5 “The Lord visited Sarah just as he had said he would and did for Sarah what he had promised. 2 So Sarah became pregnant and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the appointed time that God had told him. 3 Abraham named his son—whom Sarah bore to him—Isaac. 4 When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him just as God had commanded him to do. 5 (Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.)” NET

This is the story so far. But how does it relate to us? Paul compares Abraham’s experience with our Christian experience.

THE APOSTLE PAUL’S COMPARISON

1. God’s covenant promise to Abraham	1. God’s covenant promises to Christians.
2a. You will have a son and your descendants will be as numerous as the stars in the sky.	2a. Made commandment keepers by the Holy Spirit.
2b. Declared the Father of many nations before he had any children.	2b. Declared legally innocent in the sight of God.
2c. Became the ancestor of millions and the Jesus the Messiah	2c. The gift of immortality in the new earth.

SEEMINGLY IMPOSSIBLE OBSTACLE

3. Abraham 100 years old, reproductive system dead. Sarah 90 years old, past the age of child bearing and also barren from her youth.	3. We are sinful and dead in transgressions and sins. Eph 2:1
4. Isaac born in spite of the above obstacle.	4. Rev14:12 “Here are they that keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus.” Our obedience to God is just as real as Isaac was a real flesh and blood human being. In spite of the above obstacle

ROMANS 4:17- 24

Romans 4:17, “(as it is written, “***I have made you the father of many nations***”). He is our father in the presence of God whom he believed—the God who makes the dead alive and summons the things that do not yet exist as though they already do.” NET

God who makes the dead alive - the dead womb of Sarah and the dead reproductive system of Abraham. This is the same for us who are dead in transgressions and sin.

I have made you the father of many nations. The name “Abraham” means “father of many nations”. He was credited as though he was the father of many nations before his son Isaac was born. As soon as Abraham believed that God was able to fulfill the covenant promise, Abraham was looked upon by God as

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though that promise was fully completed. This is why his name was changed from Abram to Abraham, and why God is described as one who “summons the things that do not yet exist as though they already do.”

NOT - promises not yet fulfilled

ALREADY DO – promises regarded as if already fulfilled

Romans 4:18 “Against hope Abraham believed in hope with the result that he became *the father of many nations* according to the pronouncement, “*so will your descendants be.*” NET

Against all hope. In spite of the impossible obstacle of Abraham being 100 years old and Sarah 90 years old and barren, he still believed the promises of God and actually became the father of many nations.

Romans 4:19-24 “Without being weak in faith, he considered his own body as dead (because he was about one hundred years old) and the deadness of Sarah’s womb. 20 He did not waver in unbelief about the promise of God but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. 21 He was fully convinced that what God promised he was also able to do. 22 So indeed it was credited to Abraham as righteousness. 23 But the statement *it was credited to him* was not written only for Abraham’s sake, 24 but also for our sake, to whom it will be credited, those who believe in the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. NET.”

Credited righteousness/promises is also for us who believe. If we believe the covenant promises of God in spite of the obvious obstacle that we are dead in transgressions and sins, we will be credited by God as though the promises have been fully completed. This is because He is the God who calls things that do not yet exist as though they already do. Just as Abraham became the father of many nations literally so too will the covenant promises be fulfilled for us literally. If we believe that God can do what he has promised he will make that promise become a reality in our lives. Therefore, if you believe the covenant promises of God; the forgiveness of sin that grants us eternal life, that God will make you a commandment keeper, and the promise of Immortality, not only will you be credited as though these are fulfilled, but God will fulfil them literally. These fulfilled promises will be just as real as Isaac was a real flesh and blood human being.

THE GALATIAN ALLEGORY

Paul in his epistle to the Galatians compares Sarah and Isaac with Hagar and Ishmael, and likens them with two covenants. Sarah and Isaac represent the everlasting covenant promises fulfilled by the Spirit of God, that bring acceptance by God and deliverance from sin. Hagar and Ishmael represent a satanic counterfeit covenant which is the attempted fulfilment of the covenant promises by human effort, that brings rejection by God and leaves man in bondage to sin.

Gal 4:21-23 “Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? 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.” NET

Under the law = condemned by the Law.

Law = book of Genesis where it talks about Abraham. (writings of Moses)

Gal 4:24-25 “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; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.” NET

At Mount Sinai the children of Israel said that all the things the Lord has spoken we will do. They determined to free themselves from sin and obey all the Ten Commandments in their own strength. Forty days later they danced around a Golden Calf in a display of idolatry and wickedness thereby breaking the law and the covenant bringing on themselves condemnation and destruction. This shows how futile it is for people to try free themselves from the bondage of sin. Like Abraham and Hagar, Israel tried to perform a task that only God can do. The result was failure. Paul likens this to the Jerusalem of his day who had rejected Christ and who, being ignorant of the righteousness of God, went about trying to establish their own righteousness (Rom 10:3). Thus they were left in bondage to sin.

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Gal 4:26-27 “For it is written, Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.” NET

Unlike old Jerusalem and Mount Sinai, the new Jerusalem that is in heaven is free from sin. For it is written - Paul quotes Isaac 54:1 and explains why the heavenly Jerusalem is the mother of us all. The barren woman who bears no children is Sarah. She now rejoices and cries aloud in joy at having children. The desolate Sarah now has more children than Hagar. Hagar is old Jerusalem, teaching righteousness by works. Sarah is the new Jerusalem and the Christian church, which teaches righteousness by faith.

Gal 4:28. “Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise”. NET

Isaac is the fulfilled promise created by the power of God. We are to be as he was. We are to be living examples of God's covenant promises fulfilled. Obedience to the Ten Commandments, the forgiveness of sins, and a guaranteed place in heaven (three covenant promises) will be just as real for us as Isaac was a real human being.

Gal 4:29, “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.” NET

Those who try to be righteous by their own means and works will always persecute those who are righteous by God's Spirit. Jesus says a man's foes will be the members of his own household. It was manifested when Ishmael persecuted Isaac within the camp of Abraham, and that spirit of intolerance is still with us within the Christian church. Isaac and Ishmael represent the true and the false within the church. Those represented by Isaac are converted Spirit filled people. Those who are represented by Ishmael are sincere but carnal minded people who are religious but without the Spirit of God.

Gal 4:30-31 “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. 31 So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.” NET

The carnal minded church goes here represented by the slave woman and her son, are still in bondage to sin (transgression of the law I John 3:4). They are the unconverted class who are anchored no-where. The Bible says that God will get rid of them. They will not share in the inheritance with Isaac, the people born by promise through the spirit. We are not children of the slave woman - that is, we are not in bondage to sin. We are children of the free woman - we have been set free from sin.

Gal 5:1. “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” NET

Paul says, stand firm, be watchful and pray. Don't be entangled again with the yoke of slavery. What is this yoke of slavery that Paul is referring to here?

Gal 4:3. “In the same way we also, when we were children, were [enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.](#)” NET

What are the elementary principles of the world? **Gal 3:22,** “But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, ...” NET. Sin is the basic principle of this world. **I John 3:4,** “Sin is the transgression of the law”. The yoke of slavery of which Paul warns us is the slavery of sin, that is the transgression of the law. The whole thrust of Paul's epistle is this - Man is naturally a slave to sin and no work of any law or religious ceremony is capable of rescuing us from sin. Deliverance from sin (the transgression of the law) can only be obtained by the power of God which comes through faith.

One purpose of Paul's allegory is to teach that full obedience to the law of God for you and I who are dead in transgressions and sins is just as impossible as it is for a 90 year old barren woman to bare children. This is totally impossible, It cannot be done. Ninety year old barren women cannot have children and fallen mankind dead in trespasses and sin cannot obey God. Or is it impossible? Sarah was barren from her youth and at 90 she gave birth to Isaac because she believed a promise of God. It took a supernatural act on the part of God that completely over road the laws of nature for Sarah to give birth to Isaac. In exactly the same manner it takes a supernatural act on the part of God that completely overrides the laws of nature for fallen man to obey the law of God. So when God makes a promise and we believe it in spite of the obstacles, then 90 year old barren

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women can bare children, and fallen man can fully obey the law of God. We cannot make ourselves better people for God. But if we allow the Spirit of God to renew and transform our minds God can and will make us better people for Him.

What is the difference between Isaac and Ishmael, between those who are righteous by God's Spirit and those who attempt to be righteous by laws and/or by religious ceremonies? Both lived in the camp of Abraham, so both represent those who are active in the church the true and the false. Both are endeavouring to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Both study their Bible's. Both are waiting for the return of Christ. Isaac represents Spirit filled people, Ishmael represents the carnally minded people. Isaac is righteousness by God's Spirit. Ishmael is an honest attempt at righteousness without God's Spirit. One group has Christ in them and are saved (Col 1:27) and the other group has religion in them and are lost.

2 Pet 1:3-11, "I can pray this because his divine power has bestowed on us everything necessary for life and godliness through the rich knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and excellence. 4 Through these things he has bestowed on us his precious and most magnificent promises, so that by means of what was promised you may become partakers of the divine nature, after escaping the worldly corruption that is produced by evil desire. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith excellence, to excellence, knowledge; 6 to knowledge, self-control; to self-control, perseverance; to perseverance, godliness; 7 to godliness, brotherly affection; to brotherly affection, unselfish love. 8 For if these things are really yours and are continually increasing, they will keep you from becoming ineffective and unproductive in your pursuit of knowing our Lord Jesus Christ more intimately. 9 But concerning the one who lacks such things—he is blind. That is to say, he is nearsighted, since he has forgotten about the cleansing of his past sins. 10 Therefore, brothers and sisters, make every effort to be sure of your calling and election. For by doing this you will never stumble into sin. 11 For thus an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be richly provided for you." NET

As we can see, the indwelling Holy Spirit is the difference between salvation and damnation. Jesus tells us how to have the Holy Spirit:

Luke 11:13, "If you then, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" NET

Matthew 21:22. "And whatever you ask in prayer, if you believe, you will receive." NET

True and False Righteousness

Philippians 3:1-16 "Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! To write this again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! 3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, exult in Christ Jesus, and do not rely on human credentials 4 —though mine, too, are significant. If someone thinks he has good reasons to put confidence in human credentials, I have more: 5 I was circumcised on the eighth day, from the people of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. I lived according to the law as a Pharisee. 6 In my zeal for God I persecuted the church. According to the righteousness stipulated in the law I was blameless. 7 But these assets I have come to regard as liabilities because of Christ. 8 More than that, I now regard all things as liabilities compared to the far greater value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things —indeed, I regard them as dung!—that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not because I have my own righteousness derived from the law, but because I have the righteousness that comes by way of Christ's faithfulness—a righteousness from God that is in fact based on Christ's faithfulness. 10 My aim is to know him, to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings, and to be like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Righteousness by Faith

Keep Going Forward

12 Not that I have already attained this—that is, I have not already been perfected—but I strive to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus also laid hold of me. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have attained this. Instead I am single-minded: Forgetting the things that are behind and reaching out for the things that are ahead, 14 with this goal in mind, I strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let those of us who are “perfect” embrace this point of view. If you think otherwise, God will reveal to you the error of your ways. 16 Nevertheless, let us live up to the standard that we have already attained.” NET

Quotes from a Christian Author. These quotes are given for casual interest to highlight what has already been shown from the bible.

Desire of Ages, p98 (1898) “The birth of the son of Zacharias [John the Baptist] like the birth of the child of Abraham [Isaac], and that of Mary [Jesus] was to teach a great spiritual truth, a truth that we are slow to learn and ready to forget. In ourselves we are incapable of doing any good thing; but that which we cannot do will be wrought by the power of God in every submissive and believing soul. It was through faith that the child of promise was given. It is through faith that spiritual life is begotten, and we are enabled to do the works of righteousness.”

Signs of the Times. III p264. “Satan declared that it was impossible for the *sons and daughters of Adam* to keep the law of God. and thus charged upon God a lack of wisdom and love. If they could not keep the law, then there was fault with the Lawgiver. *Men who are under the control of Satan repeat these accusations* against God, in asserting that men cannot keep the law of God”.

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