

BOOK OF GALATIANS

“Enslaved All Over Again”

Scripture Reading: GALATIANS 4:8-11

-) **SLIDES 1-6.** Bible Jeopardy!
-) **SLIDES 7-8.** Read today’s Scripture text.
-) **SLIDE 9.** Today we continue in our expository study of the Book of GALATIANS. This is message #29. I have titled today’s message *“Enslaved All Over Again”* (v9).
-) One day, in the fall of 2019, I watched a YouTube video that changed my life. It was a music video by a group called *“Foxes and Fossils.”* They were doing a cover of the Neil Young song *“Harvest Moon.”* They did a wonderful job.
-) But what interested me in this video was the fact that they had a recording studio set up in their home. Multi-track. There is now computer software that allows a person to do this. Instead of the old analog recording with reel-to-reel tapes, everything is now done digitally. I downloaded a free version of this software and started experimenting with multi-track recording.
-) I recorded three songs with this software and was pleased with the results. A few months later, in January of 2020, a friend calls me and asks if I would like to upgrade to a different but professional version of recording software. This new software does 1000x more than my free version and the results will sound professional. I took him up on his offer.
-) He came over my house, loaded the software on my PC, and spent the entire afternoon giving me a tutorial of how the software works and what it can do. I was totally blown away and rather intimidated by its capabilities. To make a professional recording, I had to use the professional software.

-) But I knew the old (freebie) software. I was comfortable using the old freebie software. Sure, it had limitations, but I understood those limitations. The recordings were acceptable.
-) You see, I preferred to wallow in the old with inferior results, instead of learning the new and achieving professional results.
-) A few weeks after my friend had installed the professional version on my PC, he called and asked me how I was getting along using it. I had to confess that I was still using the old instead of the new. I was enslaved all over again to something that was inferior and outdated.
-) Because my friend checked up on me, I quickly moved over to the new software. Yes, it was a learning process. But the more I used it, the better results I could achieve. And I'm rather proud to say that I have made many audio recordings with this software and the results have turned out very professional.
-) I believe you are seeing the analogy I want to make here this morning with my recording software to what Paul is saying in today's text to the Galatians.
-) Hey, Mike, you want this new recording software that gives professional results, but you are reluctant to give up your old software that you know and love so well.
-) Hey, Galatians, you want the new (forgiveness of sins and the hope of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ), but you are reluctant to give up the old (the Mosaic Law, your old customs and festivals, your old days, months, and seasons, etc.)
-) **SLIDE 10**. I want to introduce. perhaps a new word into your vocabulary. That word is SYNCRETISM. Syncretism is the combination of different forms of belief or practice. When you want the new but don't want to abandon the old.
-) Let's look at what Jesus said about syncretism (no He didn't use that word), look at what the Galatians were doing, and then we will look at syncretism in the church today.

-) **SLIDE 11.** MATTHEW 9:16-17. Back on 10/18/20 I preached from GALATIANS 2:1-10 using this same text. What is Jesus telling us about these old and new wineskins?
-) Jesus brings a new covenant. Jesus is the new wine, and the Jewish religious system of that time would be old wineskins. Jesus says you cannot put new wine into old wineskins. The old wineskins have to go. The old wineskins that contained the Mosaic Law and circumcision have to go.
-) New wine means a new covenant. And that would not be easy for many Jews to accept. After all, the Law had been around for over 1400 years.
-) So, we can see from this 2-verse parable that Jesus talks about syncretism. You cannot accept the new (Christianity) and continue to hold on to the old (Judaism). You cannot combine different forms of practice or belief. Which one do you really want? Old or new software?
-) **SLIDE 12.** So, what were the Galatians doing? Regardless, if these Galatian Christian converts came out of Judaism or paganism, they wanted to hold on to certain old traditions. Read. Why would the Galatians want to be enslaved to these elemental things all over again when they knew there is freedom in Jesus Christ? Because they were syncretic. They practiced syncretism. And Paul says you cannot do that.
-) Why would the Galatians (or us) want to be enslaved to these elemental things all over again? Two possible reasons.
-) **SLIDE 13.** We become comfortable with what is **FAMILIAR** to us. We don't like **CHANGE**. We can't possibly let go of what we know. We like this (whatever this may be).
-) **SLIDE 14.** We believe that **OBEDIENCE** to these traditions will bring about God's favor. We continue to do these elemental things because that's what we have been taught and we have done these things for years. Why change?

-) This is especially true for the Jewish converts who thought that obedience to all the Jewish festivals would bring God's favor. Works-based salvation.
-) **SLIDE 15.** And sometimes when the going gets a little too tough, some people don't want to be syncretic. They just want to throw in the towel. Read. The Israelites got a taste of the new but preferred the old and wanted to go back. That would be like me continuing to use the old recording software.
-) What about today? Do people who claim to be Christians want to be enslaved all over again?
-) 1) A native on some remote island gets "saved" through the work of a missionary. But that native wants to continue his practice of voodoo and witchcraft. 2) A Catholic gets "saved" through the work of a preacher. But that Catholic wants to continue to pray to Mary and the saints for help and guidance. 3) A Muslim gets "saved" through the work of a coworker. But that Muslim wants to continue to pray to Allah because she believes he is still the only true god.
-) Those are three examples of syncretism. All three of these people are combining different forms of belief and practices.
-) Are these three people really saved or might they be just innocently ignorant? Good question. How far can we deviate from the gospel of grace and still be saved? Can a person have Jesus and also have his pagan spirits? Can a person have Jesus and also pray to a dead woman for guidance and direction for salvation? Can a person have Jesus and still believe Muhammed's Allah and Jesus' Father are one and the same?
-) **SLIDE 16.** I am certainly not the final judge. But I question a lot of things. And that's because when Jesus says the way is narrow and few find it, I believe the words of Jesus. Read.

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-) **SLIDE 17.** I am certainly not the final judge. But I question a lot of things. And that's because when Jesus says that many claim to know Him and actually do not know him, I believe the words of Jesus.
-) Do these Galatians possibly fall into this category?
-) **SLIDE 18.** GALATIANS 4:11. Paul is questioning it. And he fears for them. Why would he fear for them? Possibly because their syncretism proves they are truly not saved?
-) Did I waste my time with you people when all you're going to do is fall back to where you once were? You can't bring the old into the new. Are you truly saved or are you a new creation in Christ?
-) The gospel proclaims the exclusiveness of Jesus Christ as the only way. Do any of these three examples I gave you have multiple gods and saviors? The gospel comes in only one flavor. And that flavor is a cross between you and God.
-) We live in a time when many Christians believe that anyone who comes remotely close to a profession of faith in Jesus is saved and on the path to eternal life. But how far can one dabble in syncretism and still be saved? Personally, I'll take the conservative approach and say, "*Don't go there!*"
-) The road to salvation is not what anyone wants it to be. Repeat about the native, the Catholic, and the Muslim.
-) What about you? What about me? Do we have practices and beliefs from a former time that we want to carry over into our new relationship with Jesus Christ? We can't go there, folks. Throw away those rosary beads and the angel ornaments. We will be enslaved all over again. And I fear for those who do.
-) **SLIDE 19.** 2 COR 5:17.