

EXEGESIS AND EXPOSITION OF GALATIANS 4.21-5.26

A Paper

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By

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Introduction

In the following paper we will examine the text of Galatians 4.21-5.26 (which has been provided here along with a translation). First, we will begin by exegeting the text while adding some expository comments. Second, we will attempt to portray how this text contributes to Pauline Pneumatology.

Text and Translation

²¹ Λέγετέ μοι, οἱ ὑπὸ νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι, τὸν νόμον οὐκ ἀκούετε;

Tell me¹, those wanting to be under law, do you hear the Law?

²² γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι Ἀβραὰμ δύο υἱοὺς ἔσχεν, ἓνα ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης καὶ ἓνα ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρας.

For it has been written that Abraham has two sons, one from the slave woman and one from the free woman.

²³ ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης κατὰ σάρκα γεγέννηται, ὁ δὲ ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρας δι' ἐπαγγελίας.

But the one from the slave woman was born according to the flesh, and the one from the free woman through promise.

²⁴ ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα· αὗται γὰρ εἰσιν δύο διαθήκαι, μία μὲν ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ εἰς δουλείαν γεννώσα, ἥτις ἐστὶν Ἀγάρ.

These things are spoken of allegorically², for these woman are two covenants, one from Mount Sinai, she is bearing children unto slavery; she is Hagar.

²⁵ τὸ δὲ Ἀγὰρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ· συστοιχεῖ δὲ τῇ νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ, δουλεύει γὰρ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς.

1 The literal translation would be “you say to me” but idiomatically “Tell me” would be the most fitting translation as exemplified by ESV, KJV, NASB, NET, NIV, et al.

2 The NET n. 35 argues, “Paul is not saying the OT account is an allegory, but rather that he is constructing an allegory based on the OT account”. While this may very well be correct this note is interpretive and it seems to be saying more than Paul did.

Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and she corresponds to the present Jerusalem³, for she is enslaved with her children.

²⁶ ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐλευθέρα ἐστίν, ἣτις ἐστὶν μήτηρ ἡμῶν·

But the “above” Jerusalem, which is our mother, she is a free woman.

²⁷ γέγραπται γάρ· εὐφράνθητι, στείρα ἢ οὐ τίκτουσα, ῥῆξον καὶ βόησον, ἣ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα· ὅτι πολλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα.

For it has been written, “Rejoice! Barren woman, the one not bearing children, break forth and cry aloud, the one who is not travailing (in birth pains), because many more are the children of the desolate woman than the one having the husband.”

²⁸ ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἐστέ.

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

²⁹ ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ τότε ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθεὶς ἐδίωκεν τὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα, οὕτως καὶ νῦν.

But just as then, the one born according to flesh persecutes the one according to Spirit, so also now.

³⁰ ἀλλὰ τί λέγει ἡ γραφή; ἔκβαλε τὴν παιδίσκην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς· οὐ γὰρ μὴ κληρονομήσει ὁ υἱὸς τῆς παιδίσκης μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἐλευθέρας.

But what do the Scriptures say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman will never ever inherit with the son of the free woman.”

³¹ διό, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐσμὲν παιδίσκης τέκνα ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐλευθέρας.

Therefore, brothers, we are not children of a slave woman but of a free woman.

¹ Τῇ ἐλευθερίᾳ ἡμᾶς Χριστὸς ἠλευθέρωσεν· στήκετε οὖν καὶ μὴ πάλιν ζυγῷ δουλείας ἐνέχεσθε.

Christ has set us free into freedom, therefore stand and do not again become subject to the yoke of slavery.

3 *Gk. Lit.* “the now Jerusalem”.

² Ἴδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε, Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει.

Behold! I, Paul, write to you that if you let yourselves be circumcised Christ is no worth to you.

³ μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι.

Now I testify again, every man who lets himself be circumcised is obligated to do the whole Law!

⁴ κατηργήθητε ἀπὸ Χριστοῦ, οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ δικαιοῦσθε, τῆς χάριτος ἐξεπέσατε.

You have been severed from Christ, you who are justified in law, you have fallen away from grace!

⁵ ἡμεῖς γὰρ πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως ἐλπίδα δικαιοσύνης ἀπεκδεχόμεθα.

For we *who are* in Spirit, by faith, wait for the hope of righteousness.

⁶ ἐν γὰρ Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομή τι ἰσχύει οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is valuable, rather faith working through love.

⁷ Ἐτρέχετε καλῶς· τίς ὑμᾶς ἐνέκοψεν [τῇ] ἀληθείᾳ μὴ πείθεσθαι;

You were running well, who prevented you from obeying the truth⁴?

⁸ ἡ πεισμονὴ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ καλοῦντος ὑμᾶς.

This persuasion is not from the one calling you.

⁹ μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ.

A little yeast leavens the whole lump.

⁴ *Gk. Lit.* “who you prevented the truth not obeying” or “who prevented you from not obey the truth”. In English this becomes a double negative which results in the opposite meaning, hence the above translation.

¹⁰ ἐγὼ πέποιθα εἰς ὑμᾶς ἐν κυρίῳ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἄλλο φρονήσετε· ὁ δὲ ταρασσῶν ὑμᾶς βαστάσει τὸ κρίμα, ὅστις ἐάν ᾖ.

I have been persuaded in the Lord that you will have no other opinion, but the one disturbing you will bear the judgment, whoever he may be⁵.

¹¹ Ἐγὼ δέ, ἀδελφοί, εἰ περιτομὴν ἔτι κηρύσσω, τί ἔτι διώκομαι; ἄρα κατήργηται τὸ σκάνδαλον τοῦ σταυροῦ.

But I, brothers, if I am still preaching circumcision why am I still being persecuted? In that case the offense of the cross has been abolished!

¹² Ὅφελον καὶ ἀποκόψονται οἱ ἀναστατοῦντες ὑμᾶς.

O! That the ones agitating you would also castrate themselves!

¹³ ὑμεῖς γὰρ ἐπ' ἐλευθερίᾳ ἐκλήθητε, ἀδελφοί· μόνον μὴ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν εἰς ἀφορμὴν τῆ σαρκί, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἀγάπης δουλεύετε ἀλλήλοις.

For you have been called to liberty, brothers, only do not *turn* liberty into an opportunity *for* the flesh, but through love serve one another!

¹⁴ ὁ γὰρ πᾶς νόμος ἐν ἐνὶ λόγῳ πεπλήρωται, ἐν τῷ· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν.

For the whole law has been fulfilled in one command⁶, in the one “You will love your neighbor just as yourself.”

¹⁵ εἰ δὲ ἀλλήλους δάκνετε καὶ κατεσθίετε, βλέπετε μὴ ὑπ' ἀλλήλων ἀναλωθῆτε.

But if you are bite and devour one another, beware that you are not consumed by one another!

¹⁶ Λέγω δέ, πνεύματι περιπατεῖτε καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν σαρκὸς οὐ μὴ τελήσητε.

⁵ A literal translation would be “whoever if he is” but “whoever he may be” makes more sense in English as exemplified by ESV, NASB, NET, NIV, et al.

⁶ The ESV, KJV, and NASB are overly literal here translating λόγῳ as “word”. It is obvious that Paul was not thinking one “word” for he presents a quotation from Lev. 19.18. Therefore, the NET and NIV are preferred using the translation “commandment/command”.

But I say, Walk in the Spirit and you may never ever fulfill the desire of the flesh!

¹⁷ ἢ γὰρ σὰρξ ἐπιθυμεῖ κατὰ τοῦ πνεύματος, τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα κατὰ τῆς σαρκός, ταῦτα γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ἀντίκειται, ἵνα μὴ ἂ ἐὰν θέλητε ταῦτα ποιῆτε.

For the flesh desires against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, for these ones oppose one another, that you may not do that which you want.

¹⁸ εἰ δὲ πνεύματι ἄγεσθε, οὐκ ἐστὲ ὑπὸ νόμον.

But if you are being led by Spirit, you are not under law.

¹⁹ φανερὰ δέ ἐστιν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, ἅτινά ἐστιν πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια,

And the work of the flesh is evident, which is sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery,

²⁰ εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθείαι, διχοστασίαι, αἰρέσεις, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissention, division,

²¹ φθόνοι, μέθαι, κῶμοι καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις, ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν, καθὼς προεῖπον ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν.

envy, drunkenness, carousing, and similar things, *about* which I warn you, just the ones doing these things will not share in the kingdom of God.

²² ὁ δὲ καρπὸς τοῦ πνεύματός ἐστιν ἀγάπη χαρὰ εἰρήνη, μακροθυμία χρηστότης ἀγαθωσύνη, πίστις

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith,

²³ πραύτης ἐγκράτεια· κατὰ τῶν τοιούτων οὐκ ἔστιν νόμος.

Gentleness, self-control: against these things there is no law!

²⁴ οἱ δὲ τοῦ Χριστοῦ [Ἰησοῦ] τὴν σάρκα ἐσταύρωσαν σὺν τοῖς παθήμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις.

But the ones of Christ [Jesus] have crucified the flesh with the passions and the desires.

²⁵ Εἰ ζῶμεν πνεύματι, πνεύματι καὶ στοιχῶμεν.

If we live in Spirit, in Spirit also we should walk.

²⁶ μὴ γινώμεθα κενόδοξοι, ἀλλήλους προκαλούμενοι, ἀλλήλοις φθονοῦντες.

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Exegesis and Exposition

The Apostle Paul has been addressing the absurdities of the Judaizers by telling his audience that they should not understand themselves as slaves, but as sons (4.7). He sees that the Galatian church is suffering from an identity crisis. As sons they should not let anyone judge them on the basis of law observance which is essentially the same approach to God as their former days as pagans (vv. 8-11). This type of religion is for those who are enslaved to their gods. Paul, a Jew, urges his readers to follow his example instead knowing that he suffered to bring them the gospel (vv.12-20).

It is from this platform that he launches into his polemic. He begins by arguing that the Law speaks of itself just as Paul speaks of the Law. He presents an allegory from Gen. 16.1-18.21; 21.1-21. In this allegory Ishmael, the son from the slave woman Hagar, represents those who are genetic descendents of Abraham, but not descendents of the promise. Ironically, those who understood themselves to be the true descendents of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob are not to be equated with those who were descendents of Abraham through Ishmael! Paul then turns to Gentiles who are not genetic descendents of Abraham and he declares that they are the true children of the promise like Isaac!

Furthering the polemic against his own people he rebukes the authority of Jerusalem, which we may assume to be the source of the Judaizers, by equating the modern, earthly Jerusalem with (1) the old covenant, (2) Mount Sinai, and (3) the slave woman Hagar (vv. 22-25). Those who want to be under the Law must realize that those who remain under such a covenant are essentially slaves! They are not the children of the promise. It could be that Paul

understands the new covenant to be part of the promise and therefore anyone who does not participate in the new covenant, by default, cannot be a child of promise.

On the other hand, the new covenant is symbolized by the heavenly “above” Jerusalem. This is the “New Jerusalem”. The above Jerusalem is where God dwells and the authority of the above Jerusalem supersedes the earthly Jerusalem. Likewise, those who are part of the new covenant from the New Jerusalem are like Sarah who could not have children but miraculously gave birth to the promised child, Isaac (vv. 26-28).

To explain the persecution of the Christians by the Judaizers Paul interprets **צִיִּקֵּי** in Gen 21.9 as Ishmael laughing in mockery of Isaac, which is why Sarah wanted Hagar and Ishmael thrown out. Likewise, the Judaizers mock and scorn the true children of promise. The Judaizers will be cast out (vv. 29-31).

Paul returns from his allegory to the current situation: as free children the Christians should not return to slavery (like the Judaizers) (5.1). There is a decision that needs to be made between either the old covenant before Christ (symbolized by submission to circumcision) or the new covenant of Christ. One cannot have both; one must choose between one and another. If one thinks circumcision is necessary that this equates with thinking Messiah has not come and therefore Jesus cannot benefit such a person. It is apparent that Paul begs the question that Messiah’s arrival *will result in* the end of the old covenant and the beginning of the new. If this is so acceptance of the old covenant necessitates rejection of the new and therefore rejection of Christ (vv. 2-4)!

As with other places where Paul juxtaposes old and new covenants the analogy moves to Spirit/faith v. flesh/works (vv. 5-6). Paul condemns the person who has led the Galatians back into the old covenant way of life (vv. 7-10). Paul has not preached such a thing to them, if he had

he himself would not also have been persecuted. If he had preached circumcision he would have nullified the offense of the cross. It is obvious here that Paul knows that the Galatians know he preached the cross and Christ alone (v. 11)!

In what may be the most entertaining polemical statement ever written Paul rhetorically suggest that he wishes that those who place so much emphasis on circumcision would go all the way by castrating themselves (v. 12)! He wishes that the Galatians would realize they are free children. Freedom is equated with loving one another. As if to head off an argument from the Judaizers, that Paul is teaching some sort of antinomianism, Paul shows that free children of the Spirit are characterized by mutual service to one another through love (v. 13). The true meaning of the Law can be summarized from the statement in Lev. 19.18 “Love your neighbor as yourself”. Paul shows that those who are Spirit empowered do this very thing thereby *fulfilling the Law* (v. 14)! The Judaizers try to keep the Law, yet fail in the flesh.

The religion of the Judaizers results in division and internal conflict; it results in “biting” and “devouring” one another (v. 15). If the Galatians continue to follow this way they will be destroyed. Rather, if they would walk in the Spirit in which they already live they will avoid those things that are truly evil which Paul lists (vv. 17-21).

Equally, those who are living by Spirit will not only avoid those things Paul listed but also they will be characterized by a list of virtues Paul calls “the fruit of the Spirit”. In other words, if the Spirit truly dwells within the *natural outworking*⁷ will be love, joy, peace, et al (vv. 22-23). This is because those who are Christ’s are co-crucified with him and therefore their

7 I do not mean that these fruits are automatic results of being filled with the Spirit. If this were so there would be no reason for Paul to use so many imperatives in his epistles. I am saying that evidence that the Spirit is being submitted to will be these characteristics forming, over time, in the life of the believer.

fleshly nature is dying (v. 24). Since this is true of the Galatians they simply need to become what they already are (vv. 25-26).

Conclusion: Pneumatological Aspect

As in other places (e.g. 2 Cor. 3.5-18; Gal. 3.1-14) one of Paul's primary juxtapositions is between the new covenant as a Spirit covenant and the old covenant as a Law covenant. It is apparent from this text that one response to Paul's critique of the Law *may have been* that there will be no moral norms if the Law is forsaken. Paul disagrees with such a statement. Rather, those who are trying to obey the Law end of "biting" and "devouring" one another (5.15). Those who are filled with the Spirit restore one another (6.1). Law adherence results in what modern commentators call "legalism". Spirit adherence results in "fruit" that is exactly what the Law calls for yet cannot produce (5.22-23).

For Paul the new covenant is a Spirit covenant. It is by the Spirit that Christians fulfill the Law. The Law is encapsulated in loving one's neighbor as oneself (v. 14). If this is so, Paul seems to argue, why is it that when the Galatians try to follow the way of the Judaizers they are destroying each other? Equally, when they try the way of the Judaizers the "works of the flesh" are the only result (vv. 19-21). But when they are led by the Spirit the fruits of such submission are the very characteristics the Law calls for (vv. 21-22), especially in that it results in a community of people who love their neighbor as themselves which is best depicted by restoring the fallen brother (6.1).