

## 8. Fears for the Church



Gal 4:8-20

(8) Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods.

(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 elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?

(10) You observe days and months and seasons and years!

(11) I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

(12) Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong.

(13) You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first,

(14) and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus.

(15) What then has become of your blessedness? For I testify to you that, if possible, you would have gouged out your eyes and given them to me.

(16) Have I then become your enemy by telling you the truth?

(17) They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

(18) It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you,

(19) my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

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

### Galatians 4:8-11

Appeal to them not to turn back from their privileges as free sons, to legal bondage again.

**then** — when ye were “servants” ([Gal 4:7](#)).

**ye knew not God** — not opposed to [Rom 1:21](#). The heathen *originally knew* God, as [Rom 1:21](#) states, but did not choose to retain God in their knowledge, and so corrupted the original truth. They *might* still *have* known Him, in a measure, from His works, but as a matter of fact they knew Him not, so far as His eternity, His power as the Creator, and His holiness, are concerned.

**are no gods** — that is, have no existence, such as their worshippers attribute to them, in the nature of things, but only in the corrupt imaginations of their worshippers (see on [1Co 8:4](#); see on [1Co 10:19](#), [1Co 10:20](#); [2Ch 13:9](#)). Your “service” was a different bondage from that of the Jews, which was a true service. Yet theirs, like yours, was a burdensome yoke; how then is it ye wish to resume the yoke after that God has transferred both Jews and Gentiles to a free service?

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#### Galatians 4:9

**known God or rather are known of God** — *They* did not first know and love God, but *God* first, in His electing love, knew and loved them as His, and therefore attracted them to the saving knowledge of Him ([Mat 7:23](#); [1Co 8:3](#); [2Ti 2:19](#); compare [Exo 33:12](#), [Exo 33:17](#); [Joh 15:16](#); [Phi 3:12](#)). God’s great grace in this made their fall from it the more heinous.

**how** — expressing indignant wonder at such a thing being possible, and even actually occurring ([Gal 1:6](#)). “How is it that ye turn back again?”

**weak** — powerless to *justify*: in contrast to the justifying power of faith ([Gal 3:24](#); compare [Heb 7:18](#)).

**beggarly** — contrasted with the *riches* of the inheritance of believers in Christ ([Eph 1:18](#)). The state of the “child” ([Gal 4:1](#)) is weak, as not having attained manhood; “beggarly,” as not having attained the inheritance.

**elements** — “rudiments.” It is as if a schoolmaster should go back to learning the A, B, C’S [Bengel].

**again** — There are two *Greek* words in the original. “Ye desire again, *beginning afresh*, to be in bondage.” Though the Galatians, as Gentiles, had never been under the Mosaic yoke, yet they had been under “the elements of the world” ([Gal 4:3](#)): the common designation for the Jewish and Gentile systems alike, in contrast to the Gospel (however superior the Jewish was to the Gentile). Both systems consisted in outward worship and cleaved to sensible forms. Both were in bondage to *the elements of sense*, as though these could give the justification and sanctification which the inner and spiritual power of God alone could bestow.

**ye desire** — or “will.” *Will-worship* is not acceptable to God ([Col 2:18](#), [Col 2:23](#)).

#### Galatians 4:12

**be as I am** — “As I have in my life among you cast off Jewish habits, so do ye; for I am become as ye are,” namely, in the non-observance of legal ordinances. “The fact of my laying them aside among Gentiles, shows that I regard them as *not at all contributing to justification or sanctification*. Do you regard them in the same light, and act accordingly.” His observing the law among the Jews was not inconsistent with this, for he did so only in order to win them, without compromising principle. On the other hand, the Galatian Gentiles, by adopting legal ordinances, showed that they regarded them as needful for salvation. This Paul combats.

**ye have not injured me at all** — namely, at the period when I first preached the Gospel among you, and when I made myself as you are, namely, living as a Gentile, not as a Jew. *You at that time did me no wrong*; “ye did not despise my temptation in the flesh” ([Gal 4:14](#)): nay, you “received me as an angel of God.” Then in [Gal 4:16](#), he asks, “Have I then, *since* that time, become your enemy by telling you the truth?”

#### Galatians 4:13

**how through infirmity** — rather, as *Greek*, “Ye know that *because* of an infirmity of *my* flesh I preached,” etc. He implies that bodily sickness, having detained him among them, contrary to his original intentions, was the occasion of his preaching the Gospel to them.

**at the first** — literally, “at the *former* time”; implying that at the time of writing he had been *twice* in Galatia. See my Introduction; also see on [Gal 4:16](#), and see on [Gal 5:21](#). His sickness was probably the same as recurred more violently afterward, “the thorn in the flesh” ([2Co 12:7](#)), which also was overruled to good ([2Co 12:9](#), [2Co 12:10](#)), as the “infirmity of the flesh” here.

#### Galatians 4:14

**my temptation** — The oldest manuscripts read, “your temptation.” My infirmity, which was, or might have been, a “temptation,” or *trial, to you*, ye despised not, that is, ye were not tempted by it to despise me and my message. Perhaps, however, it is better to punctuate and explain as Lachmann, connecting it with [Gal 4:13](#), “And (ye know) your temptation (that is, the temptation to which ye were exposed through the infirmity) which was in my flesh. Ye despised not (through *natural* pride), nor rejected (through *spiritual* pride), but received me,” etc. “Temptation does not mean here, as we now use the word, *tendency to an evil habit*, but BODILY TRIAL.”

**as an angel of God** — as a heaven-inspired and sent *messenger* from God: *angel* means “messenger” ([Mal 2:7](#)). Compare the phrase, [2Sa 19:27](#), a Hebrew and Oriental one for a person to be received with the highest respect ([Zec 12:8](#)). An angel is free from the *flesh*, *infirmity*, and *temptation*.

**as Christ** — being Christ’s representative ([Mat 10:40](#)). Christ is Lord of angels.

#### Galatians 4:15

**Where, etc.** — *Of what value* was your *congratulation* (so the *Greek* for “blessedness” expresses) of yourselves, on account of your having among you me, the messenger of the Gospel, considering how entirely you have veered about since? Once you counted yourselves *blessed* in being favored with my ministry.

**ye would have plucked out your own eyes** — one of the dearest members of the body - so highly did you value me: a proverbial phrase for the greatest self-sacrifice ([Mat 5:29](#)). Conybeare and Howson think that this particular form of proverb was used with reference to a weakness in Paul’s eyes, connected with a nervous frame, perhaps affected by the brightness of the vision described, [Act 22:11](#); [2Co 12:1-7](#). “You would have torn out your own eyes to supply the lack of mine.” The divine power of Paul’s words and works, contrasting with the feebleness of his person ([2Co 10:10](#)), powerfully at first impressed the Galatians, who had all the impulsiveness of the Celtic race from which they sprang. Subsequently they soon changed with the fickleness which is equally characteristic of Celts.

#### Galatians 4:16

Translate, “Am I *then* become your enemy (an enemy in your eyes) *by telling* you the truth” ([Gal 2:5](#), [Gal 2:14](#))? He plainly did not incur their enmity at his *first visit*, and the words here imply that he had *since then*, and *before* his now writing, incurred it: so that the occasion of his *telling* them the unwelcome truth, must have been at his second visit ([Act 18:23](#), see my Introduction). The fool and sinner hate a reprover. The righteous love faithful reproof ([Psa 141:5](#); [Pro 9:8](#)).

#### Galatians 4:17

**They** — your flatterers: in contrast to Paul himself, who *tells* them *the truth*.

**zealously** — zeal in proselytism was characteristic especially of the Jews, and so of Judaizers ([Gal 1:14](#); [Mat 23:15](#); [Rom 10:2](#)).

**affect you** — that is, court you ([2Co 11:2](#)).

**not well** — not in a good way, or for a good end. Neither the *cause* of their zealous courting of you, nor the *manner*, is what it ought to be.

**they would exclude you** — “They wish to shut you out” from the kingdom of God (that is, they wish to persuade you that as uncircumcised Gentiles, you are shut out from it), “that ye *may zealously court them*,” that is, become circumcised, as zealous followers of themselves. Alford explains it, that their wish was to shut out the Galatians from the general community, and attract them as a separate clique to their own party. So the English word “exclusive,” is used.

### Galatians 4:18

**good to be zealously affected** — rather, to correspond to “zealously court” in [Gal 4:18](#), “to be zealously courted.” I do not find fault with them for zealously courting you, nor with you for being *zealously courted*: provided it be “in a good cause” (translate so), “it is a good thing” ([1Co 9:20-23](#)). My reason for saying the “not well” ([Gal 4:17](#); the *Greek* is the same as that for “good,” and “in a good cause,” in [Gal 4:28](#)), is that their *zealous courting of you* is not in a good cause. The older interpreters, however, support *English Version* (compare [Gal 1:14](#)).

**always** — Translate and arrange the words thus, “*At all times*, and not only when I am present with you.” I do not desire that *I* exclusively should have the privilege of zealously courting you. Others may do so in my absence with my full approval, if only it be in a good cause, and if Christ be faithfully preached ([Phi 1:15-18](#)).

### Galatians 4:19

**My little children** — ([1Ti 1:18](#); [2Ti 2:1](#); [1Jo 2:1](#)). My relation to you is not merely that of one *zealously courting* you ([Gal 4:17](#), [Gal 4:18](#)), but that of a *father* to his *children* ([1Co 4:15](#)).

**I travail in birth** — that is, like a mother in pain till the birth of her child.

**again** — a second time. The former time was when I was “present with you” ([Gal 4:18](#); compare *Note*, see on [Gal 4:13](#)).

**Christ be formed in you** — that you may live nothing but Christ, and think nothing but Christ ([Gal 2:20](#)), and glory in nothing but Him, and His death, resurrection, and righteousness ([Phi 3:8-10](#); [Col 1:27](#)).

### Galatians 4:20

Translate as *Greek*, “I could wish.” If circumstances permitted (which they do not), I would gladly be with you [M. Stuart].

**now** — as I was twice already. Speaking face to face is so much more effective towards loving persuasion than writing ([2Jo 1:12](#); [3Jo 1:13](#), [3Jo 1:14](#)).

**change my voice** — as a mother ([Gal 4:19](#)): adapting my tone of voice to what I saw in person your case might need. This is possible to one present, but not to one in writing [Grotius and Estius].

**I stand in doubt of you** — rather, “I am perplexed about you,” namely, how to deal with you, what kind of words to use, gentle or severe, to bring you back to the right path.



## Two Covenants

(21) 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.

(24) 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.

(26) But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

(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."

(28) Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. (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.

(30) 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.

## Galatians 4:21

**desire** — of your own accord madly courting that which must condemn and ruin you.

**do ye not hear** — do ye not consider the mystic sense of Moses' words? [Grotius]. The law itself sends you away from itself to Christ [Estius]. After having sufficiently maintained his point by argument, the apostle confirms and illustrates it by an inspired allegorical exposition of historical facts, containing in them general laws and types. Perhaps his reason for using allegory was to confute the Judaizers with their own weapons: subtle, mystical, allegorical interpretations, unauthorized by the Spirit, were their favorite arguments, as of the Rabbins in the synagogues. Compare the *Jerusalem Talmud* [*Tractatu Succa, cap. Hechalil*]. Paul meets them with an allegorical exposition, not the work of fancy, but sanctioned by the Holy Spirit. History, if properly understood contains in its complicated phenomena, simple and *continually recurring divine laws*. The history of the elect people, like their legal ordinances, had, besides the literal, a typical meaning (compare [1Co 10:1-4](#); [1Co 15:45](#), [1Co 15:47](#); [Rev 11:8](#)). Just as the extra-ordinarily-born Isaac, the gift of grace according to promise, supplanted, beyond all human calculations, the naturally-born Ishmael, so the new theocratic race, the spiritual seed of Abraham by promise, the Gentile, as well as Jewish believers, were about to take the place of the natural seed, who had imagined that to them exclusively belonged the kingdom of God.



## Galatians 4:22

([Gen 16:3-16](#); [Gen 21:2](#)).

**Abraham** — whose sons ye wish to be (compare [Rom 9:7-9](#)).

**a bond maid ... a free woman** — rather, as *Greek*, “the bond maid ... *the* free woman.”

## Galatians 4:23

**after the flesh** — born according to the usual course of nature: in contrast to Isaac, who was born “by virtue of *the* promise” (so the *Greek*), as the efficient cause of Sarah’s becoming pregnant out of the course

of nature ([Rom 4:19](#)). Abraham was to lay aside all confidence in *the flesh* (after which Ishmael was born), and to live by faith alone in *the promise* (according to which Isaac was miraculously born, contrary to all calculations of flesh and blood).

## Galatians 4:24

**are an allegory** — rather, “are allegorical,” that is, have *another besides the literal* meaning.

**these are the two covenants** — “these [women] are (that is, *mean*; omit ‘the’ with all the oldest manuscripts) two covenants.” As among the Jews the bondage of the mother determined that of the child, the children of the free covenant of promise, answering to Sarah, are free; the children of the legal covenant of bondage are not so.

**one from** — that is, *taking his origin from* Mount Sinai. Hence, it appears, he is treating of the moral law ([Gal 3:19](#)) chiefly ([Heb 12:18](#)). Paul was familiar with the district of Sinai in Arabia ([Gal 1:17](#)), having gone thither after his conversion. At the gloomy scene of the giving of the Law, he learned to appreciate, by contrast, the grace of the Gospel, and so to cast off all his past legal dependencies.

**which gendereth** — that is, *bringing forth children* unto bondage. Compare the phrase ([Act 3:25](#)), “*children of the covenant* which God made ... saying unto Abraham.”

**Agar** — that is, Hagar.

## TWO COVENANTS

(*Galatians 4:21-31*)

“Cast Out The Bondwoman!”

### HAGAR

- Bondwoman
- Ishmael: Born of flesh
- Mt. Sinai
- Bondage
- Jerusalem that now is
- Fleshly seed
- Persecutor
- Cast them out
- Shall not inherit

### SARAH

- Freewoman
- Isaac: Born of promise
- Mother of all
- Freedom
- Jerusalem from above
- Spiritual seed
- Persecuted
- Accepted in Christ
- Inherit promises

- DIFFERENT COVENANTS! -

## Galatians 4:25

Translate, “For this *word*, Hagar, is (imports) Mount Sinai in Arabia (that is, among the Arabians - *in the Arabian tongue*).” So Chrysostom explains. Haraut, the traveler, says that to this day the Arabians call Sinai, “Hadschar,” that is, *Hagar*, meaning *a rock or stone*. Hagar twice fled into the desert of Arabia ([Gen 16:1-16](#); [Gen 21:9-21](#)): from her the mountain and city took its name, and the people were called Hagarenes. Sinai, with its rugged rocks, far removed

from the promised land, was well suited to represent the law which inspires with terror, and the spirit of bondage.

**answereth** — literally, “stands in the same rank with”; “she corresponds to.”

**Jerusalem which now is** — that is, the Jerusalem of the Jews, having only a present temporary existence, in contrast with the spiritual Jerusalem of the Gospel, which in germ, under the form of the *promise*, existed ages before, and shall be for ever in ages to come.

**and** — The oldest manuscripts read, “*For* she is in bondage.” As Hagar was in bondage to her mistress, so Jerusalem that now is, is in bondage to the law, and also to the Romans: her civil state thus being in accordance with her spiritual state [Bengel].

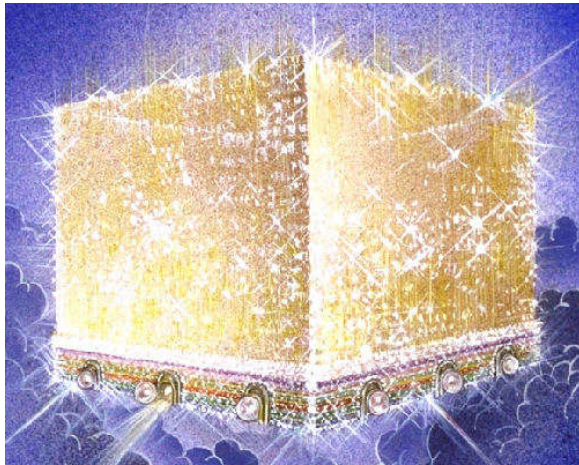
### Galatians 4:26

This verse stands instead of the sentence which we should expect, to correspond to [Gal 4:24](#), “One from Mount Sinai,” namely, *the other covenant* from the heavenly mount above, which is (answers in the allegory to) Sarah.

**Jerusalem ... above** — ([Heb 12:22](#)), “the heavenly Jerusalem.” “New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God” ([Rev 3:12](#); [Rev 21:2](#)). Here “*the Messianic theocracy*, which before Christ’s second appearing is *the Church*, and after it, Christ’s kingdom of glory” [Meyer].

**free** — as Sarah was; opposed to “she is in bondage” ([Gal 4:25](#)).

**all** — omitted in many of the oldest manuscripts, though supported by some. “Mother of us,” namely, *believers* who are already members of the invisible Church, the heavenly Jerusalem, hereafter to be *manifested* ([Heb 12:22](#)).



### Galatians 4:27

([Isa 54:1](#)).

**thou barren** — Jerusalem above: the spiritual Church of the Gospel, the fruit of “the promise,” answering to *Sarah*, who bore not “after the flesh”: as contrasted with the law, answering to Hagar, who was fruitful in the ordinary course of nature. Isaiah speaks primarily of Israel’s restoration after her long-continued calamities; but his language is framed by the Holy Spirit so as to reach beyond this to the spiritual Zion: including not only the Jews, the natural descendants of Abraham and children of the law, but also *the Gentiles*. The spiritual Jerusalem is regarded as “barren” while

the law trammelled Israel, for she then had no spiritual children of the Gentiles.

**break forth** — into crying.

**cry** — shout for joy.

**many more** — Translate as *Greek*, “Many are the children of the desolate (the New Testament Church made up in the greater part from the Gentiles, *who once had not the promise*, and so was destitute of God as her husband), more than of her which hath an (*Greek*, “THE”) husband (the Jewish Church having God for her *husband*, [Isa 54:5](#); [Jer 2:2](#)).” Numerous as were the children of the legal covenant, those of the Gospel covenant are more so. The force of the *Greek* article is, “Her who has THE husband of which the other is destitute.”



### Galatians 4:28

**we** — The oldest manuscripts and versions are divided between “we” and “ye.” “We” better accords with [Gal 4:26](#), “mother of us.”

**children of promise** — not children *after the flesh*, but through the promise ([Gal 4:23](#), [Gal 4:29](#), [Gal 4:31](#)). “We *are*” so, and ought to wish to continue so.

### Galatians 4:29

**persecuted** — Ishmael “mocked” Isaac, which contained in it the germ and spirit of persecution ([Gen 21:9](#)). His mocking was probably directed against Isaac’s piety and faith in God’s promises. Being the older by natural birth, he haughtily prided himself above him that was born by promise: as Cain hated Abel’s piety.

**him ... born after the Spirit** — The language, though referring primarily to Isaac, born in a spiritual way (namely, by the promise or word of God, rendered by His Spirit efficient out of the course of nature, in making Sarah fruitful in old age), is so framed as especially to refer to believers justified by Gospel grace through faith, as opposed to carnal men, Judaizers, and legalists.

**even so it is now** — ([Gal 5:11](#); [Gal 6:12](#), [Gal 6:17](#); [Act 9:29](#); [Act 13:45](#), [Act 13:49](#), [Act 13:50](#); [Act 14:1](#), [Act 14:2](#), [Act 14:19](#); [Act 17:5](#), [Act 17:13](#); [Act 18:5](#), [Act 18:6](#)). The Jews persecuted Paul, not for preaching Christianity in opposition to heathenism, but for preaching it as distinct from Judaism. Except in the two cases of Philippi and Ephesus (where the persons beginning the assault were pecuniarily interested in his expulsion), he was nowhere set upon by the Gentiles, unless they were first stirred up by the Jews. The coincidence between Paul’s Epistles and Luke’s history (the Acts) in this respect, is plainly undesigned, and so a proof of genuineness (see Paley, *Horae Paulinae*).

### Galatians 4:30

[Gen 21:10](#), [Gen 21:12](#), where Sarah’s words are, “shall not be heir with *my son*, even with *Isaac*.” But what was there said literally, is here by inspiration expressed in its allegorical spiritual import, applying to the New Testament believer, who is antitypically “the son of the free woman.” In [Joh 8:35](#), [Joh 8:36](#), Jesus refers to this.

**Cast out** — from the house and inheritance: literally, Ishmael; spiritually, the carnal and legalists.

**shall not be heir** — The *Greek* is stronger, “*must not be heir*,” or “inherit.”

### Galatians 4:31

**So then** — The oldest manuscripts read, “Wherefore.” This is the conclusion inferred from what precedes. In [Gal 3:29](#) and [Gal 4:7](#), it was established that we, New Testament believers, are “heirs.” If, then, we are heirs, “we are not children of the bond woman (whose son, according to Scripture, was ‘not to be heir,’ [Gal 4:30](#)), but of the free woman (whose son was, according to Scripture, to be heir). For we are not “cast out” as Ishmael, but accepted as sons and heirs.