

Children of Promise

By Warren Zehrung – March 12, 2011

Brethren, in a world beset by natural disasters, earthquakes, tsunamis, nuclear containment buildings blowing their tops off, and wars of men, it is easy to forget the wonderful pledge that God has made to us, and it is this – we are the children of promise.

We are going to look into the scriptures today and see what that means, and what an incredible promise it is. What does it mean: Children of promise?

God has made that promise to us here and now; it applies today.

The same promise is made to the world, but they will have to wait until after the Kingdom of God has been established over all the earth.

Being the children of promise is an incredible truth that the apostle Paul strove diligently to make clear to the Galatians. We have been going through the Epistles, and we will be in Galatians 3 and 4 today. I would like you to keep your marker between chapters 3 and 4 of Galatians, because we will be turning back and forth.

It seems that at one time, when first called by God, the Galatians were indeed the children of promise – but the enemy came in the form of Judaizers. And they came upon those immature converts, and turned their hearts from their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul had taught the Galatians that Jesus was the Messiah.

The Messiah brought a message of the Kingdom of God, a message of how the inhabitants of the Kingdom would live in Godly Love. What did Jesus teach in His day-to-day teachings? He taught the rules of the Kingdom. It was a message of being peacemakers with love and worship toward our Father in heaven. It was a message of repentance of sin, of mercy and forgiveness, of reconciliation and sacrifice. It was a message of glorious eternal life as children of God.

But, for the Galatians with their conversion being rather new and incomplete, the Galatians left off believing that they were redeemed by Christ.

They stopped looking to Jesus Christ in faith, and they sought to become righteous on their own terms through various rituals and works after the commandments and doctrines of men – namely the Judaizers who came up from Palestine and Jerusalem, and so forth.

In the book of Galatians, Paul expresses his dismay that the Galatians had left the true gospel that Jesus Christ brought for a counterfeit gospel – which is no gospel at all.

The book of Galatians is so important to us today, because it not only shows clearly the fulfillment of the promise that God made to Abraham and Isaac, but it makes the concept relevant right down to the present day that we are in.

The Galatians, like us, were baptized and kept the Sabbath, and they kept the food laws and the Holy Days. Yet they came to the point where they were no longer faithful to Christ.

Here is an important question, and we must apply the scriptures to ourselves, brethren. Could it be that we too, who were baptized and keep the Sabbath, the food laws and the Holy Days, could it be that maybe we may not be faithful to the precepts of Christ?

Paul, in his own inimitable and unspeakable way, elucidates the consequence of Abraham's attempt to bring about God's promise through his own methods, and not God's way. God told Abraham that when he believed God that was the right way to go, but when he took matters into his own hands that was the wrong way to go. We will look at how Abraham did that; how he was faithful and how he was unfaithful at times. Abraham is a friend of God, and he is faithful, but he made his mistakes as well.

The intent of these verses for the Galatians is this:

Paul shows the fallacy of what they are doing by reverting back to circumcision and ritual law.

Paul shows that the Galatians are attempting to do exactly the same thing that Abraham did – when he did it wrong – and that was to bring about the promise of God their own way – not God's way.

There are tremendous implications in the book of Galatians for the Church of God today. We need to apply these scriptures to ourselves. They are warnings for our day, and they are admonitions for us, "upon whom the ends of the world have come."

God's will is going to be worked out; there is no doubt about that.

But, how many brethren are making the same mistake that the Galatians made by trying to bring about their own salvation, their own way, aside from the way that Jesus Christ would have us go about it.

Are we living by every directive and command of Christ in faith, or has our once ardent faith deteriorated into a substitute religion – as happened to the Galatians? We will see that they changed the right way of worshipping God to a substitute religion.

So brethren, let us internalize these words of Paul: "*You are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*" (Galatians 3:26) We are the children of God, "*By faith in Jesus Christ,*" not by works, not by rituals, not by circumcisions, and not by substitutes for a godly religion.

Do we understand what that means: "by faith?" The Galatians obviously did not. They had begun to substitute ritualistic religion for the practice of true Christianity in their lives. Some people think that cannot happen. You get baptized, you go to church on Saturday and you are headed for the Kingdom. Brethren, there is much more to our faith in Jesus Christ.

Abraham was unable to bring about the promise of God through his own devices.

God gave Abraham the promised son, Isaac, when it had become entirely impossible for Abraham to father the child of promise.

Likewise, the Galatians were unable to obtain the promise of God by substituting the works of the ritual law.

Do we realize and understand the difference between living a life faithful to Jesus Christ, and a life of substituting our own works?

The promise, brethren, is the same to us: "*Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise*" (Galatians 4:28). We are the children of promise, and the Galatians were the children of promise, but they left that first love and brought in substitutes. This is what we have to be looking for.

Romans 8:17a And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...

Now brethren, take that seriously. If any of you have ever been in a situation to leave your home or your car to somebody else, they are your heir. If your parents have left something to you, you are the heir. We are then heirs; we are children of God; and joint heirs with Christ. Jesus Christ is going to inherit the universe.

Romans 8: 17b ...if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

We are going to see today that there is some very difficult language in Galatians 3 and 4. We will try to make some sense out of it because Paul speaks in some difficult ways sometimes.

We will see that Paul speaks of Ishmael and Hagar, Sinai and Abraham's seed.

We are going to make sense of it. What is it all about? What is Paul saying to the Galatians?

What does it have to do with us?

Let us begin where we left off in our study of the epistles. We will try to run straight through the scriptures.

It would seem right here that what Paul wishes to accomplish, and this is Paul's specific purpose statement, is a very powerful statement that we must analyze and understand!

Galatians 3:14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

We know that God made some tremendous promises to Abraham, and we will see what some of those promises are today. This is to let the Galatians know that those promises to Israelites, to the children of Abraham, might come on the Gentiles. How? Through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of God's Holy Spirit, that makes us His children, through faith. Paul is going to hammer it and hammer it again. It is through faith that we receive the promise of the spirit. What is the promise?

"This is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25).

John is speaking of eternal life, as children of God, in the Kingdom of God, heirs with Jesus Christ for ever and ever.

God's promise is sure – no man can change it or undo it. God's promise is positive and sure.

Galatians 3:15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannuls, or adds thereto.

You cannot go and say, "After my Daddy died, and he left his Last Will and Testament, I am going to go back and make some changes to it". It is confirmed so nobody can undo it and nobody can add to it.

Paul explained that the promised "Seed" in the ultimate, spiritual sense is Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind. When you see the word "Seed" think of an heir, a child, an offspring, children, and that sort of thing. The promised seed, in the ultimate spiritual sense, is Jesus Christ, the Savior of mankind. When God talked to Abraham and spoke of the singular seed, He was speaking of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 3:16a Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made...

Paul is going to clarify it for us, and we would miss that because we cannot see the original language.

Galatians 3:16b ...He saith not, And to seeds [plural], as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

So Paul tells us that this promise to Abraham is going to be fulfilled in Abraham's seed, who is Jesus Christ. That is how the spiritual promise is fulfilled, by Jesus Christ coming, and by us having faith in Jesus Christ.

God said to Abraham:

Genesis 13:15 For all the land which thou see, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

This promise of land was partially fulfilled with the entry of the children of Israel into the Promised Land.

Abraham was willing to offer up Isaac – God made this promise:

Genesis 22:18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Brethren, notice "all the nations", He is saying this to the Gentiles. It was written way before Paul's day.

Galatians 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant [with Abraham], that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

Paul has already made this point. Somebody cannot come back and rewrite a covenant 430 years later. It was sealed, and you cannot change the terms or anything about it. The promise is still there is what Paul is saying. The promise to the Gentiles along with everybody else is still there.

Exodus 24:3 And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do.

This was a marriage covenant, and this was the covenant that came four hundred and thirty years later.

But they did not obey God, and they broke the law, and there were terrible consequences as a result. They went into captivity for Sabbath violations and idolatry.

But that does not undo the promise that God made to Abraham some four hundred and thirty years later, because the Israelites were unable to keep the law.

That violation of God's law did not disannul God's promise, "*that it should make the promise of none effect.*" It didn't change God's promise. And just because the Israelites went off track, God's promise to all nations is still extant.

True, some of Israelites [mostly Jews] had to return from captivity to Jerusalem for God to fulfill His promise to Abraham of the spiritual seed. Jesus Christ was a Jew. He was born of those who returned from the captivity.

Paul argues in Galatians 3:17 that the covenant made with Israel at Mt. Sinai four hundred and thirty years after the covenant promise that was made with Abraham could not in any way nullify God's original promises made to Abraham. Abraham believed in the LORD, and He, God, counted it to him for righteousness. So if God says something, you believe it. If God says something, you do it. If God says something, you obey Him. That is faith.

When Abraham was 86 years old:

Genesis 16:1-2 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

It doesn't mention it here, but God had told Abraham that it was going to come from your loins, from your body, so it would fulfill that part.

This attempt to bring about God's promise was NOT by faith. Abraham and Sarah had to figure it out for themselves. They were trying to work it out for themselves and they did not follow all of God's rules precisely, did they?

Genesis 17:1 And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect.

It is the same for us, brethren, we are to walk before God and be perfect. We are to believe Him, and live in faith, and do what God says.

Genesis 17:2 And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.

God is repeating it again, just like when He said to count the stars.

There is physical fulfillment of the covenant, and a spiritual fulfillment. The physical portion of that covenant promise to Abraham was fulfilled with the birth of Isaac. Isaac was a son of Abraham and Sarah.

Genesis 17:19 And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him.

So we see the physical promise yield to the spiritual promise of spiritual children. You can see that in verse 19. It goes from the physical promise to the spiritual. It starts off with a son, and then "*I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant...*" that transcends the physical into the spiritual.

Genesis 26:3 God said to Isaac the son of promise ... and I will perform the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father;

He is telling Isaac that it is going to come his way.

Genesis 26:4 And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

Again this is a reference to Jesus Christ, because blessings do not come from men, but they come from God.

Genesis 26:5 Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

Brethren, James speaks about how we cannot have faith without works. Abraham did not just say, "I believe God." Abraham obeyed God's voice, he kept His charge, and he kept His commandments, His statutes and His Laws. He did all of that. That was faith, he acted in faithfulness.

Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance [comes about as a result] of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

It was a unilateral promise that God made. It was sure to be fulfilled. No matter what man did, God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Galatians 3:19 Wherefore [what purpose] then serves the [ceremonial and ritual] law? [to what end] It was added because of transgressions [to expose sin], till the seed [Jesus Christ] should come [of] whom the promise was made; and it was ordained [enacted - administered] by angels in the hand of a mediator [Moses - a mediator between God and man].

If there is no law, there is no sin. The promised Seed was Jesus Christ, and those promises were to last up until Jesus Christ came.

Galatians 3:20 Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

God can come in and unilaterally make a promise, because He is God and He does not die; and He is all powerful and He can keep it.

A mediator negotiates terms between two parties – but God acted unilaterally when He made the covenant with Abraham

Galatians 3:21 Is the law then against the promises of God? [No Way!]God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.

You would not need Jesus Christ to come and die for our sins if laws would take care of it. But law cannot take care of that sort of thing.

Galatians 3:22 But the scripture has [shut up] concluded all [the world] under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.

Notice that, brethren, not to those that are circumcised, not to those who do the ritual law, but that the promise by Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. That is the faithful church brethren, in their day and in our day.

Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up [reserved] unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed [when Christ came].

In the days of Israel coming out of Egypt, they didn't have the faith, they didn't have Jesus Christ, they didn't have the entire spiritual part of the promise fulfilled.

Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring [lead] us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The word is not really schoolmaster, it is almost like a crossing guard, the one who brings you safely. Notice that, brethren, "bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith". Our past sins, our guilt wiped away, eradicated, removed for ever, and forgotten by God. It is by faith, not by the Law, not by rituals, not by works. That is how it takes place. The Law was to lead us to Christ, to say that this is a sin, and to show us our need. But only with Christ might we be justified by faith.

Galatians 3:25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

We no longer require those ceremonies or rituals to point out our sins. Jesus Christ pointed out our sins. He said, 'Repent, and I will die in your place'.

Galatians 3:26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

This is the way that we become the children of God. This is the way that we receive God's Holy Spirit. It is not through any works of our own. We cannot be good

enough; we cannot stack enough bricks, or haul enough loads. We cannot have enough rituals, or kill enough calves, be circumcised, to be righteous in God's sight. It comes by faith in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on [we have clothed ourselves with] Christ.

Just put this in your notes, brethren, to read the first half of Romans 6. The man of sin is dead, and you bury that person who was the sinner. Paul says that our righteousness is as filthy rags.

What we have is Israelites and Gentiles - both enjoy access to God's promises through Christ. It was made real clear all the way back in Abraham's day, that it would include all nations, not just the Israelites. Paul points this out over and over to the Gentile nations.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

He introduces a thought here that we will see a couple of times today. You are one in Christ Jesus. One in spirit, one in mind, one in heart, and one in faith. This transcends our understanding, of how we can all be one in Christ. Just as a husband and wife are one, and Jesus and the Father are one.

It is only through Christ that anyone can claim the eternal inheritance promised to Abraham's seed.

We are one body in Christ, and thus we are children, and we are heirs.

Galatians 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

True Christians then are Abraham's spiritual descendants, being united in one body, as we just saw. Jesus Christ is the promised seed. Jesus has only one church, Jesus Christ has only one body.

Romans 12:5 So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

Paul hammers this; there is a unity. There is only one church. When Christ looks down from His heavenly throne He sees one church body, one gathering of people, and one called out group of people.

Romans 4:11 And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the

father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:

When all of this was going on with Abraham, when God chose him and made the promises to Abraham, he was an uncircumcised man. Paul is saying that Israelites and Gentiles all fall under this clause "children of promise."

Romans 4:12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

Not the Jews and Israelites only. Paul is trying to say as clear as he can, that God made this promise when Abraham was uncircumcised. This was to show that this promise extends to the circumcised and the uncircumcised.

Romans 4:13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.

Paul again hammers this fact, it is not by the works of the Law, it is not by circumcision, it is not by rituals, but the righteousness of faith. Brethren, we have to work, we have to study, we have to pray, and ask God to show us what this righteousness of faith means. How do we become righteous of faith?

Abraham believed God, and he acted accordingly.

James 2:22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?

There were works involved, but that is the work of keeping the Ten Commandments, that is the work of serving his brother, that is the work of believing God, and that is the work of being faithful to God. That is the kind of faith, which is faith with godly works.

Romans 4:14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect.

If you can get circumcised and be an heir, if you can wash enough pots, to be an heir of the universe, then faith is made void. You don't need a promise, all you have to do is see what the rituals are and do them.

Romans 4:15 Because the law works wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.

The Law pointed out the sins.

Romans 4:16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.

We can see today brethren, that Christians are the heirs of the eternal inheritance promised to Abraham. If we are of Christ, if we belong to Christ, then we are heirs along with Christ.

They were not doing the works of Abraham, they were not faithful, and they were not looking for the promised Messiah.

Romans 9:7-8 Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Brethren, it is imperative that we know and understand what we must do, who we must become, and how we must live in faith to be counted as children of the promise. They are the ones counted recipients of the promise, heirs to everything that Christ is heir to.

Romans 9:9 For this is the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sarah shall have a son.

That is the promise. Abraham's and Sarah's bodies are dead to having children. But it is the word of promise. God made the impossible happen.

Romans 9:10-11 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calls;

What he is saying there in verse 11, is that we did not know how his children were going to turn out, and yet God said that He was going to go through them to get to Christ.

Galatians 4 is a difficult chapter. We will go through it, and try to clarify it, and see what Paul was saying to the Galatians to see if they could hear what Paul was saying. I am not sure that they did hear. Later on Paul said, "All of Asia has left me." Was everything that he had done with the Galatians lost? Was his work futile?

Galatians 4:1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a slave, though he be lord of all [he can be royalty, but a royal is not allowed the freedom to do whatever he wants when he is a child].

Galatians 4:2 But [he] is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

The father will say when he gets to be 18 years old or 21 years old.

Galatians 4:3 Even so we [Israelites], when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world [the elementary lessons of outward things].

We were born according to the flesh and the pulls of the flesh.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fulness of the time [the appointed time] was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

Just like us, brethren, subject to the law.

Galatians 4:5 That He, [God might] redeem them that were under [subject to] the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

That is not a good translation. That means that we might literally have the son-ship of God. We are literally the children of God. God is our spiritual Father.

Galatians 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

Brethren, say to yourself, "I am a child of God, I am the child of promise."

Brethren, when Jesus said "Abba," it was like when you were young and you said, "Daddy". You looked to your Dad for everything, for protection, sustenance, and for strength. This is the way that Jesus says "Abba."

Jesus spoke an Aramaic dialect – that is a Syro-Chaldaic/Hebrew mixture. The children of Israel were carried away and they mixed with the people of the land. Jesus was raised up in Nazareth. So when Jesus actually spoke the "Lord's Prayer – when He was teaching the disciples how to pray, He said "Abba," he did not say, "Pater". If you take your concordance and you look it up you will see "Pater" but that is translated into the Latin or Greek language. "Abba" is a very dear, close, and tender relationship with God the Father.

Galatians 4:7 Wherefore thou art no more a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

You are a child of promise. Now keep in mind, Paul is saying this to the Galatians who had gone off course, off track, and they had gone back to ritualistic ceremonies and sacrifices. They were saying that you had to be circumcised and so forth. Paul is spelling out that no we are way above that, we are way past that.

Galatians 4:8 Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are not gods.

They were in Satan's realm of demons.

Galatians 4:9 But now, after that ye have known [gained knowledge of] God, or rather are known of [acknowledged by] God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

How can you go from faith in Christ, and having your sins covered, and having the righteousness of Jesus Christ, freely imputed to you by grace and then go back under the beggarly elements? He is referring to the rituals and so forth.

The Galatians had left the true gospel and faith in Jesus Christ to go backward into Jewish ceremony and rituals.

They were going the wrong way.

Galatians 4:10 Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

That was their versions of what we today would call Christmas, Easter, May Day, astrology, and all of these pagan times.

Understand this, brethren, when a Protestant reads this verse, he interprets this verse to mean the Sabbath, Holy Days, Jubilee years. Brethren, that is nonsense, and it is easily disproved. The pagan Galatians could not possibly revert back. Look at verse 9, "*how turn ye again*". How could they go back to the Sabbath and the Holy days? They never knew them. They were pagans, and they did not know the true God, and they never observed those days in the first place. So Paul couldn't possibly have said "*how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements.*" They went back to their Christmas and their Easter.

Galatians 4:11 I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.

This is a dark day for Paul. He said, 'I did all of this teaching, all of this baptizing, all of this praying and all of this worshipping and teaching; did I do it in vain?'

Galatians 4:12 Brethren, I beseech you, become as I am [one who does not rely on physical circumcision]; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me [wronged me] at all.

The circumcision that God desires is the circumcision of the heart.

Galatians 4:13 Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh [sickness] I preached the gospel unto you at the first.

Apparently Paul had intended to only pass through Galatia, but he got so sick he could not travel until his health was restored. While he was sick was when he began to teach the Galatians.

Galatians 4:14 And my trial which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.

Paul spoke the words of Christ, and he spoke the words warmly, tenderly, affectionately, and lovingly.

Galatians 4:15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? [Paul originally received most affectionate care of the Galatians] for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

That is how much they first appreciated Paul's message. Apparently Paul's illness or disease had something to do with his eyes.

Galatians 4:16 Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?

Brethren, correction hurts. Sometimes when you give correction people will not have anything to do with you again, even though it comes directly from the word of God.

Galatians 4:17 They [the Judaizers] zealously affect you, but not well [not for the good]; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.

It is just like when we saw Peter exclude some of the Gentiles, thinking he was better than they were. That was a terrible mistake that Peter made. They considered the Gentiles as unclean and untouchable.

They are just like men today that just want the numbers, all they want is to have a big organization, to count you among their converts.

Remember what Jesus said of them in Matthew 23:15, "*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.*"

Galatians 4:18 But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.

It is always right to do the right thing.

Galatians 4:19 My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you,

Paul is worried over them; he was like a mother hen with little bitties. He really fretted over what was happening to the Galatians because he loved them.

Galatians 4:20 I desire to be present with you now, and to change my [tone of] voice; for I stand in doubt [perplexed] of you.

Paul is at a loss as what to do to help them get back to the true Gospel of Christ, in faith. He is going to pick out some verses right out of Genesis. The first of that was the Law.

Galatians 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, [Hagar] the other by a freewoman [Sarah].

Notice very closely, brethren, verse 23:

Galatians 4:23 But he [Ishmael] who was of the bondwoman was born after flesh; but he [Isaac] of the freewoman was by [virtue of the] promise.

God worked it out, it was by promise and by faith. Abraham attempted to bring about God's promise through his own methods with Hagar – Ishmael was the product. God brought about His will through Sarah – Isaac the son of promise. We will read the record of that in a moment.

Galatians 4:24 Which things are an allegory [Paul is giving an analogy]: for these [two women represent] the two covenants; the one [given] from the Mount Sinai, which gendereth [the child is born into] bondage, which is Agar. [Hagar]

It seems like a strange analogy to us but consider this: The word Hagar in Arabic means "a rock" which is what the Arabs in Arabia call Mt. Sinai. Paul spent years over there in Arabia.

Galatians 4:25 For this Agar [Hagar] is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers [corresponds] to [earthly] Jerusalem which now is, and [she] is in bondage with her children.

The covenant at Mount Sinai was not to eternal life.

Galatians 4:26 But [Sarah the second covenant] is [heavenly] Jerusalem [where God's throne is] which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.

What Paul is saying here, and the translation is difficult, is that the mother is the church of the firstborn. Sarah was the mother of Isaac the firstborn.

In Hebrews 12 the Church is called the "church of the firstborn." We have been set apart and sanctified by God.

Galatians 4:27 For it is written [Isaiah 54:1], Rejoice, thou barren that bears not; break forth and cry, thou that travails not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which has a husband.

That is a promise. We saw before, all of the stars in the sky, that is how many spiritual offspring Abraham's is going to have. Eventually, the spiritual seed of Abraham will outnumber the actual physical children of Abraham.

Isaiah 54:1 Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

God will bring many sons and daughters to glory through faith in Jesus Christ, and not because they were the physical heirs of Abraham.

Paul is explaining this to the Galatians that they were trying to make the same mistake that Abraham made. He tried to work it out with Hagar. But look at the problem that this has brought on the world today. The Islamic terrorism that we see today is a result of Abraham going into Hagar and Ishmael being born. It was wrong for Abraham to try to work it out. It was wrong for the Galatians to try to work it out. God is going to bring sons and daughters to glory.

In Galatians 4:28 we come to the title of today's sermon. Here is the point that Paul is making for the Galatians, and for us.

Galatians 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

Brethren, think of how remarkable that is. We are the children of promise just like Isaac was, not born naturally unto God the Father, but by God's promise to Abraham.

But we have to have faith and all that entails. We are the children of promise.

I Peter 2:9-10 "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy"

Galatians 4:29 But [yet,] as then he that was born after the flesh [Ishmael] persecuted him [Isaac] that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

If you study your Hebrew back there you will see that Ishmael actually molested Isaac. What Paul is saying is that the Judaizers in the same way were violating the Christian Galatians. Paul will have some choice words for them when we come to Galatians 5:12.

Galatians 4:30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture [Genesis 21:10]? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

God wrote that way back in Genesis, pointing out to us that we live by faith, we believe in Christ and we live as Christ lived. We do all of the things that Christ said. As we saw at the beginning of the sermon today, the beginning of faith, the reconciliation, the peacemakers, the love of God, which is what is being asked by God when we demonstrate our faith.

The Judaizers are not heirs – it is the faithful Galatians who are heirs – it is, brethren, we are the children of promise.

Galatians 4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

We are the heirs - the children of promise. Only those who are the "children of promise," those who "do the works of Abraham," which is believing God, are considered to be Abraham's spiritual seed as members of the church.

In chapter 5 Paul will admonish the Galatians not to go backward into circumcision, ceremonies and rituals, and become entangled again with the yoke of bondage like Ishmael.

In closing, brethren, we, the brethren of God's Church, have received a special standing of being the children of God.

Therefore the church is the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16), the heirs of salvation – the children of promise.

WZ/pp/sl