**BCM Bible Study – April 12-13, 2023**

**Galatians 4:21-5:12: The Covenants and Judgment for the False Teachers**

This passage continues Paul’s argument against those who falsely teach that Christians must adhere to the Abrahamic covenant of circumcision and the Mosaic law that surrounds it. The false teachers claim that our faith in God must be justified by the law. Paul argues against this by saying that Christ’s sacrifice on the cross has already bought our freedom from the bondage of the old law and established the new covenant.

**Read Genesis 21:8-13.** In Genesis, Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, gives birth to two sons, Ishmael, and Isaac. Ishmael was born out of Hagar, a bondswoman of Sarah, Abraham’s wife. She was given to Abraham to bear a child for him to try to bring about the promise that God made in their own timing instead of in his. God eventually revealed to them that the child from his promise would come from Sarah, who previously could not bear children. This child, Isaac was to be the one who God will bless Abraham’s descendants through.

**Read Galatians 4:21-31.**

* What do the two covenants described in v.24 represent?
	+ According to Douglas J. Moo, the two covenants that seemed to be described here are the old, Abrahamic covenant and the new covenant. Hagar, represents the old, Abrahamic covenant, and Sarah represents the new covenant. The two covenants also represent the Jewish holding on to the old covenant and the practice of circumcision, while the Christians are under the new covenant under the freedom of Christ.
* Why do you believe that being under the new covenant is better than being under the old covenant?
* What separates those of the “woman in bondage” and those of the “freewoman”?
* What does v. 27 mean by “For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband?” (NKJV)
	+ This is an allegory of the age to come. The barren woman, Sarah represents the new age to come, which is made possible through the spread of the gospel. The new Jerusalem will replace the old Jerusalem, represented by Hagar, and be inhabited by believers (Moo).
* Why do you think the spread of the gospel is key to the building of God’s kingdom on Earth?
* What does it mean for us to be children of the promise like Isaac (v.28)?

**Read Galatians 5:1-6**

* How did Christ make sure we are free through Him?
* What “yoke of bondage” in v. 1 are we not to be entangled with (look towards v. 4)?
	+ The bondage of submitting to justification by the law and its binding authority (Moo).
* Where are we ourselves entangled with a “yoke of bondage”?
* Why is Paul here adamant that Christ will profit you nothing if you become circumcised?
	+ That trying to be justified by the law and through our own endeavor instead of through Christ is futile (Moo).

Why have the Galatians fallen from grace by trying to be justified by the law (see v. 4)?

* How can we make sure not to fall into the trap of justifying our faith through legalism?
* What does it mean to eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith (see v. 5)?

**Read Galatians 5:7-12**

* What is Paul’s response to the false teaching given to the Galatians in v.7 and 8?
* **Read Exodus 12:14-20**
* What importance does unleavened bread represent to those who know Jewish law in Galatians 5:9?
	+ Leaven (yeast) is a rising agent for bread, so having any small portion incorporated in the making of the bread will cause it to rise. The Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover gives leaven a negative connotation (Moo).
* Who is the “leaven” that leavens the whole lump?
	+ This refers to those who falsely teach the doctrine of justification of the law. Those few who are teaching this false doctrine can have a big effect on anyone who listens and affect the understanding of the true doctrine (Moo).
* Where have you seen someone affected by the teaching of justification by the law?
	+ How do we make sure that we do not become a bad influence in teaching legalism ourselves?
* Why should Paul have confidence in the Galatians to faithfully seek out the right teaching (see v. 10)?
	+ Paul wants the Galatians to live the way God calls them to and is writing this letter to encourage them to go against the teaching of the false doctrine of legalism. (Moo).

**Read Romans 2:2-3**

* What judgment should those that trouble the Galatians bear?
	+ The false teachers will eventually face the judgment of God for leading people astray from their teachings (Moo).
* Why is Paul in v. 11 trying to defend himself against “his teaching” of circumcision?
	+ Supposedly he was trying to fight against the false teachers justifying their own doctrine by falsely claiming that Paul himself still preaches the practice of circumcision in the way of justification by law (Moo).
* Why does Paul call for those who trouble the Galatians to cut themselves off (see v. 12)?
	+ Paul cares for the Galatian Christians and does not want them to be led astray. This use of sarcasm here about wishing the false teacher would just emasculate themselves just show again how much Paul believes in the harm the false teachers are doing (Moo).

Challenge: Over the next week, reflect and discuss with friends about what we as the Church can improve in combating legalism.