

Religion isn't the way

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- [0 : 0 0] What he tells him is there is no other option. It's not like a puzzle that has kind of three roots to the one place, you know. There is just one way.
- Christ. The gospel of Christ. Justification by faith alone. And this really, in this message, is a real high point as he gets back to Christ and just preaching Christ to these Galatians.
- He's giving these feeble-minded Galatians a way out. But just as quickly as he's reached this high point, Paul returns to addressing the state of these people.
- Verses 17 to 20, Paul is telling them, just stop being people pleasers. Resist the soft talking, courting, appeasing Judaizers.
- Resist them. But, see, Paul recognizes that the Judaizers, they weren't standing up and they weren't pointing their finger. They weren't being aggressive with the Galatians.
- [1 : 0 6] They weren't calling them to account. In fact, they were doing quite the opposite. What the Judaizers were doing is they were manipulating the Galatians.
- They were manipulating them to get them to support them in the way that they were living and in the teaching that they were trying to pass on to people.
- Why? To return them to the law. To get the Galatians to turn away from Christ. And that also what the Galatians would end up doing is put the Judaizers up on a pedestal and make much of them.
- What the Judaizers were doing is they were seeking prominence. They were seeking position. They were seeking status amongst these people.
- And that was completely contrary to what Paul was confronting earlier in this very chapter about pride and self-centeredness.
- [2 : 0 8] What Paul is asking the Galatians to do is to resist and turn from these wolves in sheep's clothing. And what's the point of this?
- What is the point that Paul is making? See, what we need to learn too is that pandering to people, telling them what they want to hear is absolutely no way to pastorally care for a person.
- It fails to deal with issues. It just sweeps things under the carpet. There is no discipline in that. There's no holding anyone to account.
- It's a tragic, tragic approach. What it ends up doing is just leaving people floundering. Floundering in a really unhealthy state. What the Judaizers did is perhaps the way some church pastors are dealing with congregations under the guise of keeping the peace.
- Or what some families are maybe adopting for a quiet life. Perhaps what some couples tolerate for the sake of the marriage.
- [3 : 2 3] But it's a way of living that is truly unhelpful. Correction and facing the truth.
- Facing the facts of a situation. Dealing with a false doctrine. A sinful way of living is going to be painful. There is absolutely no denying it.

But the renewal of a person, the restoration of that person in Christ, despite the pain, you've got to agree. I mean, that's of greater value. And of lasting and eternal benefit.

And so it should never be avoided. Do we need to recognise that perhaps that's needed? Perhaps we need to change our behaviour.

Perhaps we need to change our approach. Instead, what Paul is saying here is that, yeah, it's good to make much of one another.

[4 : 30] And of your children. But it needs to come with a good purpose. To come with a right heart. With a genuineness about it as well. Deeply personal.

Devoted with God at the centre. And not self. Sharing it in the agony. Sharing the discomfort of understanding a person's position in Christ.

That Christ would dwell and be formed in them. You know, that picture of dying to self. And Christ being us. And being the gain.

Longing to be with each other. So that when you're apart, you wish to be together again. And I have a friend who worked for a year or so in Melbourne.

And his family always planned their holidays around church. So they wouldn't miss out on fellowship. They were just dying to be in church. And that really spoke to me.

[5 : 33] That he and his family, they just wanted to be in church with other believers on a Sunday. And they would do everything they possibly could to ensure that that would be the case. Paul wants to be personal.

He wants us to be personal. He's writing to the Galatians. But that wasn't what he wanted to do. He knew that to be there in person would actually be far more beneficial.

Especially with such a tough and to the point kind of letter that he's writing here. This whole message within this book of Galatians would have been much better in person.

But despite all that the Galatians were doing and the harshness of the tone of Paul's writing to them. Paul cares for them. Paul really cares for these people.

But he's despairing. He's despairing because he desires the best for them. He desires the best that is Jesus Christ.

[6 : 49] And not all the rubbish that the Judaizers were coming out with. He wants the Galatians to have Jesus Christ and Christ only. We get to our third point.

There is really another way. And it's the one way. See Paul's tone is changing as he goes through Galatians 4 here. And he's beginning to encourage them. Who it is that they are.

And that there is only one way. And that one way to live. Now I'm sure that I'm not alone in thinking this. But when you're growing up.

Do you ever wonder who am I? Why am I here? Perhaps even today. Am I the person that I was designed to be?

Am I behaving the way that God wants me to be? Paul has addressed the freedom in Christ. He's addressed the danger of turning away from justification by faith alone.

[7 : 52] And now his letter is seeking to address who the Galatians truly are. And in whom their identity is. What he's asking them is whether their spiritual identity is in religion.

Or if it's in the freedom in Christ. And so Paul, a trained rabbi. A Jewish teacher. He presents three combinations to the Galatians.

And he's using this allegorical language. Which for Jewish rabbis would have. Would have been the pinnacle of explaining a passage at that time. So Paul knows how to speak at their level.

And explains the passage using two mothers. Two cities. And two children. There's only one choice. In each. One represents slavery.

Slavery to the law. The other. Freedom. And that freedom in Christ. Start off with these two mothers. First Hagar. No. The concubine.

[9 : 05] Whom Sarah and Abraham had used to provide a baby. Because. What had Sarah and Abraham done? They had doubted God's promise. To start off with. They thought that they could do their little bit to help God along.

Hagar had had a son. Ishmael. Hagar. She mocked Sarah. Because Sarah. Had been barren for all those years.

And at that time. It would have been shame to a woman. Real shame. And so what Sarah did is. She had Ishmael cast out. Sent away.

So that he. He wouldn't share in the heresons. Of her son. It said that Hagar stands. For doubt. The tendency.

To doubt. To do things in one's own strength. To do things in one's own will. But notice here in Galatians 4.

[10 : 04] What Paul also says is that. That Hagar represents Mount Sinai. Hagar represents. The old covenant of the law. Of slavery.

And of those without freedom. Now the Galatians may have read those words. And thinking. Well no wonder we've listened to the Judaizers. You know. At least they provided. A way.

For us. To become part of Israel. By adhering to the law. And their customs. You know. At least we'll be safe then. In God's. In God's line.

You can imagine them thinking that. But then. What Paul does is. He refers to Sarah. Abraham's wife. Sarah was the free woman. The mother of Isaac.

Isaac. God's promised. Miracle child. Paul tells the Galatians. That their spiritual identity. Is in Sarah. Sarah.

[11 : 03] Their mother. The woman who had received. The promise. Of God. By faith. By the Holy Spirit. Not by.

The law. Not by works. Sarah. And so. Sarah. She stands for the. For the new covenant. In Jesus Christ. Paul is saying.

The Galatians is. That's where. Your identity belongs. That is the one way. He talks of the two cities. Jerusalem on earth.

Which is in slavery. Jerusalem above. The spiritual. Jerusalem. The spiritual. Jerusalem. Is the Christian church. Established. In the heavenly.

So Paul is continuing to ask. Who is your spiritual identity in? Slavery. Or freedom. Is it. In the pagan city.

[12 : 01] Of Jerusalem. Here on earth. Or is it in the city. Of God above. There is one way of freedom. One way of freedom. Paul is telling them.

The question for us too. Is are you living for the physical city. Of pleasure. Or the spiritual city above. That is God's church. And then Paul is talking about.

Two children. Now how often. Do we stereotype the children. In families. I can speak. As one who. Who until recently. Had just three children. And you say. How the first one is this.

And the second one. Well that's the middle one. So that one will always have this issue. And then you got the third one. That's the youngest. He'll be the spoiled one. And you make all these stereotypes. Don't we? When there's three. I'm struggling more now. Under the four.

Because I'm like. Well that one used to be. Oh that one's not the middle one. That one's. Oh yeah. But anyway. What Paul is saying. Is actually. The concern is distinct.

[13 : 00] Between just two. Ishmael. And Isaac. Whether you're. You're born of Ishmael. The. The. The child. That had been sent away.

Living under the law. Or. Or whether you're born of Isaac. The child. Or the promise of God. Living in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And Paul says. Who are you born of? Who are you born of? In fact. How do we tell? He says.

Are you. Are you persecuted. For being a child of the promise? If you are. It's telling. It's telling. That. That you're one of God's. Quite often.

Persecution. It's not from unbelievers. Quite often. Unbelievers. They. Invariably. Will accept. Or deny the gospel. And they just deal with it. Talk to people in the streets.

[14 : 00] It's just one or the other. It's quite straightforward. And they don't come back. And there's no other issue. But the persecution. Is likely from. From those who are. Nominal.

Christians. Nominal. Christians. Who hear the word of God. And. Perhaps they read it. But they don't like.

What they hear. And they don't like. What they read. Where it. Kind of. Ruffles their feathers.

Their Christianity. Is founded in the law. And therefore. They're not saved. They're not as good. As they think. That they are.

And so. They have a problem. And they deal with that. By going on the attack. How often. Do we do that as well. When we don't like something. We don't agree with it.

[14 : 59] And we go on the attack. See. It's the same here. Hence why. The nominal Christians. Come out. All guns blazing. They're constantly nitpicking.

Undermining. A ministry. Of the pastor. Openly criticizing believers. What a mark. Of a nominal Christian. As a father.

I'm watching. One of my sons. At the moment. Battle at school. With people who think. He's a religious freak. With people saying.

You know. He's just one of those weird Christians. The son's taken constant hits. Has done ever since. We moved up here. Two and a half years.

I tell you. It's really difficult to watch. Really. Really difficult to watch. For me.

[15 : 57] I look on. And I find it very difficult. To see how these people. Are going to change. It's very difficult. To look on. And think that there's going to be. Anything positive.

That's going to come out of this. Very difficult. To feel that there's any good. In what he's having to experience. Right now. But the one thing I do know.

Is that my son knows. Who he is in Christ. My son knows. That his identity. Is in God the Father.

Perhaps. You're sitting here. This morning. And you can empathize. With my position. Or maybe even with my son's position. Perhaps. That's your experience.

Right now. Be encouraged. No. If you're living for Christ. And your identity. Is in Christ. What Paul is saying is.

[16 : 57] You're on the right path. You're on the right path. You're following. The one way. You know. These three pictures. That being painted by Paul.

What they're trying to do. Is connect. With our imagination. What he's trying to do. Is make the point. Pictorially. That they. They. The Galatians. They no longer live.

Under the old covenant. Of the law. But they now. They now can live. In the grace of God. By justification. He's telling them. Make the right choice.

Make the right choice. Turn to Christ. Turn back to Christ. Paul is.

He's. Passionately. Urging them. To be free. In Christ. To make the choices. He's presented. The two options. To each of them. Each of us here.

[17 : 54] This morning. We. We have. That exact. Same choice. To make. And it's really. Really simple. Whose are we? Are we one of God's.

Or not? Who is our spiritual. Identity. In. It's your spiritual. Identity. In the slavery.

Of the law. Or is it in the freedom. Of Christ. When we can. Identify with Christ. There is nothing. Absolutely.

Nothing. That this world. Can do. To affect that. Hallelujah. Because you're on the victory side. When you're in Christ. When you're in Christ.

You are. Heirs. And so you have the inheritance. We have chosen then. At the Jerusalem above. And of the greatest importance.

[18 : 53] We are. Truly. In Christ. Christ. Christ has the center stage. Christ is the light. Of our lives. And we are held. In the cleft.

Of the hand. Of the almighty. Safe. Sure. And secure. Paul is. Presented to the Galatians.

Their folly. He is presented. The ridiculous. And he's presented the way out. Why? Because there is really.

Really. Another way. And that is in Christ. And Christ alone. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.