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Galatians

But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? Galatians 4:9

In response to his previous statement, Paul now directly questions the Galatians. The word, "But" implies a contrast. They did not know God, and at that time they "served those which by nature are not gods." In contrast to this state, he says, "But now after you have known God..." The word for "known" is not the same as in the previous verse. Instead of ignorance, they have now obtained knowledge concerning God.

And yet, to qualify the thought, he says, "...or rather are known by God." God has testified that He knows those who are His. This sentiment is exactly described by Paul later in his second letter to Timothy -

"Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.'" 2 Timothy 2:19

Paul's qualification of his first words are because it is God who "has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into" their hearts. God has known them and testified to the fact that they are His by the giving of the Spirit. Because of this, they have moved from bondage to freedom. Now, to show the utterly absurd nature of what they are

doing by accepting the premise of the Judaizers and inserting the law into their lives, he asks, "How *is it that* you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements...?"

Paul is incredulous that they would give up on the marvel of being reconciled to God through the grace of Jesus Christ and turn back to the law. The law couldn't save a single Jew in all of their history. It only showed them how sinful their sin was and that they needed something else. Paul spoke of the dilemma of being under the law in Romans 7 -

"For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. ²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!"

It is this type of dilemma that caused Paul to call the law and its accompanying precepts "weak and beggarly elements." It was ineffective in bringing salvation. In fact, even if someone delighted in the law, all it could do was make them miserable. Further, the more they delighted in it, the more misery it would produce! But, Paul notes to them that by turning to the law, it appeared that they "desire again to be in bondage?"

Wasn't freedom in Christ enough? Wasn't the reception of the Spirit sufficient? Did you find bondage that wonderful? Paul is stunned at the situation! If he were alive today, he would continue to be stunned. This pernicious infection is still seen in God's people in one form or another 2000 years later. Countless souls have said, "Christ's work isn't enough!" In so doing, they disgrace that great and exalted Name.

Life application: The law is annulled; Christ has come and fulfilled it. Trust in Christ, and in Christ alone for your salvation.

You observe days and months and seasons and years. Galatians 4:10

Paul now gets to the heart of what he means by his words of the previous verse concerning being again in bondage. The Judaizers had come in and confused the Galatians into believing that they were to be following Jewish practices. Their lies included the observance of certain appointed calendar events. The word for "observe" is *paratéreo*. It is a stronger word than simple observance, as if someone were merely curious about how a Passover Seder was conducted. Rather it means, "To observe scrupulously." They were being duped into believing that they had to meticulously follow these calendar events and to follow the practices of them as the Bible details.

The "days" is specifically speaking of weekly Sabbath observances. The Galatians were told that this was the standard for a weekly rest and they needed to follow it according to the precepts of the law. This heresy has been handed down in aberrant cults such as the 7th Day Adventists. The Hebrew Roots Movement has people observing this as well. Paul is rather clear about this in Romans 14:5, 6 -

"One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who observes the day, observes *it* to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe *it*."

"Months" is speaking of the monthly New Moon celebrations mandated for Israel. These are detailed, for example, in Numbers 28:11-15. Again, the Galatians had been fed the crazy idea that they needed to follow this type of observance.

"Seasons" refers to the Feasts of the Lord in Leviticus 23. These included the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits, the Feast of Weeks, the Day of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. These are all fulfilled in Christ's first advent and they are now set aside with the rest of the law. However, the Galatians (and those who fail to follow proper

doctrine even today) are misdirected by the nutty belief that observing these will make us more pleasing to God than Christ's fulfillment of them!

"Years" would specifically be referring to the sabbatical years (every seventh year) and the years of jubilee (every fiftieth year) which are detailed in the law. Again though, Christ had fulfilled the law. In their attempt to appear more righteous than that granted by Christ, the Judaizers (and the heretics who have followed them) pass on their fanatical ideas about following these obsolete observances.

Paul addresses this again specifically in Colossians 2:16, 17 -

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, ¹⁷ which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

As he notes there, these things were only a "shadow of things to come." They only pointed forward to Christ. Now we have the fullness of what they only pictured. It is utterly ludicrous to think that anyone could properly observe most of these anyway. There is no temple and thus there is no way they could be properly observed. Thus, it becomes a pick-and-choose type of salvation. The entire premise of following these things is to be rejected.

Life application: If Christ has fulfilled the law, then let us rest in the work of Christ!