

'The Life That I Now Live'

Keeping the Holy Days Requires Faith

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For centuries, theologians have tried to discredit and do away with God's feasts and holy days. They falsely argue that Paul spoke against these days as enslaving. Of course he said nothing of the sort. We know that because of reading all of his epistles. But this argument exposes a deeper spiritual problem of faith that we all have to be careful not to succumb to. And we may easily slip into seeking our own pleasures in a way in which we lose interest in properly observing God's commanded assemblies. Most mainstream Christians look at the commanded assemblies of God as a nuisance that interferes with their lifestyle.

Turn with me to Galatians 4, verse 9. We will be spending all of our time in Galatians 4, verses 8 through 10. Ignorant and uninspired theologians liberally use Galatians 4:9-10 to try to prove the abolition of God's commanded assemblies.

Galatians 4:8-10 But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. 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? You observe days and months and seasons and years.

Mainstream Christianity believes Paul is referring to the observance of God's feast days in this set of scriptures here. They use these verses to support their argument that observing God's commanded days is a form of slavery, but of course they totally missed the point on these scriptures. Paul's audience was the church in Galatia located in a province in Asia Minor. The church congregation was composed mainly of Gentiles who had a history of worshipping pagan deities. So Paul expressed his disappointment in them because they showed a tendency and a desire to return to the familiar pagan religious observances that they had formerly been involved in.

Let us go back to verse 8.

Galatians 4:8 But then [that is, before their calling], indeed you [that is, the Gentiles], did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.

In verse 8, Paul was speaking to the Galatians who had been pagan, in contrast to the Jews who had known God's laws and statutes. Paul refers to the Gentiles as having been in a worse condition of servitude than the Jews had been under their Phariseism. He emphasized the absurdity of their turning back to the state of bondage of any kind after the spiritual deliverance they had obtained from the degrading servitude of those pagan rites that those Gentiles had been involved in.

The sense is, if the Jews were in such a state of servitude under the oppressive rites of the Jewish law, how much more servitude was the servitude of those who had been pagans? Thankfully, the good news of God's way of life had delivered them from that servitude and made them spiritually free. So Paul was just, in a sense, miffed at how they could have had the tendency to go back to those things.

The phrase "those which by nature are not gods" refers to the fact that their gods were imaginary beings. Many were the objects of creation such as the sun, moon, and stars, and many were dead heroes that had been exalted to objects of worship.

I can't help at this point but think about Dale Earnhardt as having been raised to such an object of worship after his death. No matter what the object was, the servitude was still very real. Today many people idolize their cars or their homes or sports figures such as I mentioned. And idolatry is always slavery. There is never a time where it is not, and the servitude of sinners to their ambitions and passions and appetites is no less oppressive than was the servitude to those pagan gods of the Gentiles.

Now Paul's concern was that the Galatians were returning to the way of life from which God had called them. They had not noticed because their migration back to paganism was subtle and it was gradual. Now again reading verse 9 of Galatians 4.

Galatians 4:9 But now after you [that is, members of God's church] 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?

So not only had some of the Gentile Galatians turned back to worshipping their pagan gods, a similar thing was happening to some of the Colossians, which Paul did write about in Colossians. Now you do not have to turn there, but in Colossians 2, Paul warns of some members of the Colossae congregation who were apparently wrestling with a religious system that combined elements of Greek speculation, of Jewish legalism, and of oriental mysticism. And so in one sense, the Colossae congregation was even worse than the Galatians because they were mixing so many different religions and were so confused in what they were going back to. Now Paul warned the Colossians in Colossians 2, verse 8.

Colossians 2:8 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.

So these were members attending God's church in both Galatia and Colossae who had a tendency to go back to their previous beliefs. Now these were the weak and beggarly elements that they were returning back to, that is, knowledge from the human mind. In other words, humanly reasoned conclusions from rebellious attitudes based on deception. Now again, let us read here in verse 9 of Galatians 4.

Galatians 4:9 But now after you [that is, members of God's church] 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?

The emphasis in verse 9 is that we are known by God rather than we first knew Him because He is the one who makes the first contact with us in calling us according to His plan of salvation. Paul wanted to avoid the impression that their association with God was because of their own efforts. God had called them and they had responded. But this is where many who attend God's church go astray. They believe they can earn salvation by doing the things that appear to be religious.

They have a form of godliness but without true faith, and they are lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Religious hobbyists are also lovers of pleasure because they seek their pleasure in wrangling over words, and so you will find many disputes within religious organizations and even within God's church over Scripture. But many of these individuals are just religious hobbyists who are seeking their own pleasure. Today people who have been associated with God's church may sink into any number of spiritual servitudes similar to their bondage before conversion. Some become slaves of mere forms in religion or even self-righteousness. Some are slaves to fashions of the world, and others may surrender to the chains of power and ambition, and they seek to be acknowledged.

Now in verse 10 of Galatians 4, Paul categorizes these practices into general time periods.

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

Days, months, seasons, and years were the pagan idolatrous festivals and observances that the Galatian Gentiles had observed before their conversion. These times could not be God's holy days as the Protestants tried to teach, because these Gentiles had never observed God's days before being called. And so this is not a reference to God's holy days here in verse 10. The object of this verse is to specify some of the things they were turning to and becoming enslaved to. They were turning to keeping their traditional superstitious holidays, to things that they idolized.

Here in verse 10, Paul refers to man's traditional religious days that are not commanded in the Bible. These are days that honor events and other religions, days, for example, of saints of the Catholic Church, as well as

Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day, Halloween, and any other day that has its origins in the worship of pagan gods or things idolized by this society. Applying this to our time today, look at the disintegration of the religious organizations that have housed God's church over the years. How could so many who previously attended God's church go back to such pagan bondage? They had not left behind their tendency to be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. They were still citizens of the world rather than citizens of heaven because they still desired what the world had to offer.

And this danger has affected all Christians for almost 4,000 years of the church's history. And when Passover came each year, those who later left the church did not really have Christ dwelling in them. The mind of Christ was not there, and there was little or no light in them. Their focus was on what they wanted to do, and they looked at it as just another required assembly that took them away from what they wanted to do. So to them, observance of Passover was just a casual ceremony that just took up some time of theirs that they would rather have been doing something else in. So the danger is always there, and many have succumbed to it.

So it is something that we have to be cautious about as well. Passover and the rest of God's feast days did not look as interesting and fun as the world's holidays to those people. Oh, how they missed them! Basically they lacked faith and that was the reason that they had this attitude. They tried to be justified by the law, that is, they went through the motions of keeping the statutes and the laws.

But we are justified by faith, as Paul tells us in Galatians 3:24, that is, we must have a deep set commitment to God's way of life, not just in form, but an attitude from a pure and genuine and sincere heart. Faith without works is a dead faith, and many of those who left the church of God were seemingly active in God's church, but without faith they were lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. And so their service in God's church was seeking their own pleasures rather their love for God's way of life and the statutes and laws that He has set down.

Faith is, in general, the point of view that a certain thing is true. Its primary idea is trust. A thing is true and therefore worthy of trust. So if you do not believe something is true, you cannot trust in it. Therefore, you cannot have

faith in it. It exists in many degrees up to full assurance of faith in accordance with the evidence of which it rests. We know from Hebrews 6:1 that faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. And those who love pleasure have no trust and see no evidence, therefore, they have no faith.

Turn with me just over a page to Galatians 2, verse 20. Faith accepts and believes the whole revealed Word of God as the absolute truth. But the special act of faith that unites us to Christ is the full acceptance of Jesus as our Savior. Always associated with this belief in the truth is our deep sense of sin, our distinct view of Christ, our consenting will, and our sincere loving heart together with our reliance on and trusting in Christ.

Now here in Galatians 2 and verse 20, Paul says.

Galatians 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

While the religious world does its best to reject and ignore God's feasts, we continue to keep them because we live by the faith of Jesus Christ and are obedient to His commands. The life that we now live in the flesh, we live by faith in Jesus Christ.