**UNDERSTANDING THE SECOND ARGUMENT**

Paul’s primary concern in this new section is to show once more that the true children of Abraham are not under confinement to Torah, and so are ‘free.’ In one sense the former concerns remain:

(a) the immediate focus is again on Abraham

(b) the ultimate question is who are the true sons of Abraham, since

(c) the ‘true sons’ are sons according to the promise, who

(d) are thus destined to inherit the promise and

(e) the Spirit once again plays the primary role, this time as the key to both the promise and the inheritance.

Paul now turns to these matters by way of the theme of slavery that emerged in 4:1-7. The theme is picked up through Hagar. But the issue remains the same: ‘enslavement to the Law’ with a hint the Galatians are being ‘enslaved’ by the agitators. The theme of freedom is then picked up through Sarah and her son. Isaac, who, Paul says was ‘*born by the power of the Spirit’* (4:29). Paul concludes the argument by making the same point he made in 3:29 and 4:1-7, that ‘*we are not children of the slave woman* ( = Law), *but of the free woman* ( = Christ)’ (4:31). Near the end (4:29) he brings in the agitators again, as those born ‘according to the flesh’ who are persecuting those born ‘according to the Spirit’ and who must be ‘thrown out.’

Summarising the points: a. and b. below carried the biblical data for Paul’s first argument; c. carries the biblical data for his second argument.

a. 3:23-29 by faith in Christ, Gentiles belong to the true ‘seed’ of Abraham; and the Law was the temporary

measure until this should happen

b. 4:1-7 by faith in Christ, Gentiles are true ‘sons of God’; the Law meant slavery, but they are now free through

Christ and the Spirit

c. 4:21-31 by faith in Christ, Gentiles are true ‘sons of Sarah’ (born into freedom); since the Law means to be

born into slavery, they must cast out the persecutors

This second argument comes in three parts: the presentation of the biblical data (4:21-23); the analogical interpretation of the data (4:24-27) and the application to the Galatians (4:28-31).

In the first two paragraphs of chapter 5, Paul wraps up this argument with a two-fold appeal. The first appeal (5:1-6) picks up the theme of ‘freedom’ from the preceding argument. Here Paul points out the disastrous results if the Galatian men submit to Jewish circumcision: they will be alienated from Christ and so will have fallen from grace. He concludes in 5:5,6 with the divine alternative.

In the second appeal in 5:7-12, Paul simply cannot understand how the Galatian believers can have been so completely duped by those who in reality are their enemies. So, he ends saying that instead of applying the knife to other men’s flesh, the agitators should emasculate themselves. With that Paul turns to the final argument, showing how the Spirit functions as the fully-adequate divine replacement of Torah, thus eliminating any need for to be locked in to Law-observance (5:13 – 6:10).

Without direct referencing these studies have drawn, sometimes heavily, on:

Galatians (Pentecostal Commentary Series) by Gordon Fee (Deo Publishing, Dorset, UK, 2011)

*Galatians* (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries) by R. Alan Cole (Inter-Varsity Press, Nottingham, England, 1989)

*Galatians and Thessalonians* (Paul for Everyone) by Tom Wright (SPCK, London, 2002)

*The Holy Bible (New International Version)* (International Bible Society, Colorado Springs, CO., USA, 1984)

*The Message of Galatians* (The Bible Speaks Today Series) by John Stott (Inter-Varsity Press, Nottingham, England, 1992)

*Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* by W. E. Vine (Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN, 1996)