

Galatians 4:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?

Analysis

Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? Paul launches into allegory using Scripture. "Tell me" (legete moi, λέγετέ μοι)—answer me, respond. "Ye that desire to be under the law" (hoi hypo nomon thelontes einai, οἱ ὑπὸ νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι)—those wanting to live under law's jurisdiction and authority. They desire law-based relationship with God. Paul challenges: you want law? Let's examine what law teaches!

"Do ye not hear the law?" (ton nomon ouk akouete, τὸν νόμον οὐκ ἀκούετε)—don't you listen to the law? "Hear" (akouō) means both physical hearing and understanding, heeding. "The law" (ton nomon) can mean the Pentateuch broadly or specific Torah texts. Paul will use Genesis (part of Torah) to demonstrate that law itself teaches salvation by promise through faith, not by works. This is master rhetorical move: using the Judaizers' authority (Torah) to demolish their position. If you properly understand Torah, you'll see it points to Christ and faith, not to circumcision and works-righteousness.

Historical Context

"The law" in Jewish usage could mean the entire Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy), not just commandments. Paul will cite Genesis 16-21 (Sarah and Hagar narrative) to prove his point. Jewish interpretive tradition included allegorical and typological reading alongside literal meaning. Paul employs this method, seeing in the historical Sarah-Hagar story a theological allegory of two

covenants. His audience, influenced by Judaizers who claimed Torah authority, must reckon with Paul's Torah-based argument against their position.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How carefully do you read and understand Scripture, especially parts you cite to support your positions?
2. Are you open to discovering that texts you thought supported your views actually teach something different or deeper?
3. What does it mean to truly 'hear' Scripture—not just read words but understand and heed God's message?

Interlinear Text

Λέγετέ	μοι	οἱ	ὑπὸ	νόμον	θέλοντες	εἶναι	τὸν	νόμον
Tell	me	G3588	under	the law	ye that desire	to be	G3588	the law
G3004	G3427		G5259	G3551	G2309	G1511		G3551

οὐκ	ἀκούετε
not	do ye
G3756	G191

Additional Cross-References

Galatians 3:10 (Word): For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

Romans 3:19 (Word): Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

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