

Galatians 4:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.

Analysis

But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Paul points to historical pattern. "But as then" (all' hōsper tote, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ τότε)—just as in that time. "He that was born after the flesh" (ho kata sarka gennētheis)—Ishmael, representing the flesh-principle. "Persecuted him that was born after the Spirit" (ediōken ton kata pneuma)—Ishmael persecuted Isaac. Genesis doesn't explicitly state this, but Genesis 21:9 says Ishmael "mocked" Isaac (Hebrew metsacheq), which Jewish tradition interpreted as harassment or persecution.

"Even so it is now" (houtōs kai nyn, οὕτως καὶ νῦν)—the same pattern continues. Those operating on the flesh-principle (Judaizers, law-observers, works-righteous religionists) persecute those operating on the Spirit-principle (believers trusting Christ's finished work and the Spirit's power). Law-religion has always opposed grace-religion. Cain killed Abel (1 John 3:12); Jews persecuted Jesus and apostles; Judaizers attacked Paul and confused Galatian believers. This persecution validates the Spirit-born: if the flesh-born opposed you, you're in good company with Isaac!

Historical Context

Paul experienced constant opposition from Judaizers who followed him undermining his gospel (Acts 15:1-5, 2 Corinthians 11:4-5, Philippians 3:2). This wasn't merely theological debate but often physical persecution (Acts 14:19, 2

Corinthians 11:24-25). The flesh/Spirit conflict manifests in religious persecution: those trusting their own righteousness can't tolerate those trusting Christ's righteousness alone. This pattern continues: legalists and works-righteous religious people often most fiercely oppose grace-centered gospel proclamation.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. Have you experienced opposition or mockery from religious people for trusting grace through faith rather than works of law?
2. Why does law-based religion so often oppose and persecute grace-based Christianity rather than welcoming it?
3. How should you respond when persecution comes from religious quarters rather than secular sources?

Interlinear Text

ἀλλ'	ὥσπερ	τότε	ὁ	κατὰ	σάρκα	γεννηθεὶς	ἐδίωκεν
But	as	then	G3588	after	the flesh	he that was born	persecuted
G235	G5618	G5119		G2596	G4561	G1080	G1377
τὸν	κατὰ	πνεῦμα	οὕτως	καὶ	νῦν		
G3588	after	the Spirit	so	even	it is now		
	G2596	G4151	G3779	G2532	G3568		

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 21:9 (Parallel theme): And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking.

Romans 8:13 (Spirit): For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

Galatians 5:11 (Parallel theme): And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.

John 15:9 (Parallel theme): As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.

John 3:5 (Spirit): Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Galatians 4:23 (Parallel theme): But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.

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