

Weak and Beggarly Elements

“How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements wherein ye desire to be in bondage?” (Gal. 4:9)

These words in Galatians refer to the Law of Moses. This is obvious from reading the letter. That Law was written in stone. It was cold, rigid, inflexible, and without mercy. The death penalty was administered for “crimes” which seem rather innocuous by modern standards. For example:

- Death to those who smote father or mother (Ex. 23:15.)
- Death to those who cursed father or mother (Ex. 23:17.)
- Death to the drunkard and glutton (Deut. 21:21-23)
- Death to someone gathering sticks on the Sabbath (Nu. 15:32-36.)
- Death to those who touched the ark (II Sam.6:7.)
- Etc.

It seems that the Law of Moses was incredibly severe. Perhaps more so than any law ever written. For example, if two men were striving together and the wife of one tried to deliver her husband, and put forth her hand and took the other man by the “secrets.” The Law required: **“Thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity her” (Deut. 25:11-12.)**

Man would consider such law as very strong, but Paul considered it **“Weak and beggarly?”** The Law, no matter how severe, was powerless to make men good. In fact, it had just the opposite affect. The Law actually made sin strong. Paul wrote: **“The strength of sin is the Law” (I Cor. 15:56.)** Sin has dominion over those under law (Rom. 6:14.)

The words used in Gal. 4:9 are painfully poignant and descriptive.

Weak = *asthenes* which means without strength, or impotent.

Beggarly = *ptochos* and describes a beggar who crouches down or hides.

Elements = *stoicheion* and refers to the first principles from which a whole composite is derived.

The writer of Hebrews adds that the Law was not only weak, but also unprofitable (Heb. 7:18.) What a devastating picture of law is given to us in Scripture!

There is, however, Good News for students of the Law. **“For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Rom. 8:3-4.)**

In this regard it is important to remember that we may write laws trying to control people, but God did not! He wrote the Law that every mouth might be stopped and all the world become guilty (Rom. 3:19.) He wrote the Law as a Schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24.)

Commandments to “touch not, taste not, and handle not” have an appearance of wisdom, but are of no value in putting to death the deeds of the body (Col. 2:21-23.) Jesus taught that sin does not start outside and work it’s way in, it starts inside and works it’s way out (Mk. 7:14-23.)

While the Law does not have the power to transform lives, the Gospel of Jesus Christ does. His Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16.) The power that raised Jesus from the dead and set Him at the right hand of God operates in the life of every true believer (Eph. 1:17-21.) This power is not only capable of establishing us (Rom. 16:25,) but also presenting us without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing (Eph. 5:27.) Even more incredible, God is able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think by means of the power that works within us (Eph. 3:20.)

DO NOT BE ASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL, IT IS THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION!

