

## Children of Promise Galatians 4:21-31

**Introduction:** If you read last week's sermon text in Hebrews 10, just before you began reading Galatians this week, you understand Paul's tone toward these Christians. Works don't dilute the Gospel. Works are a non-Gospel. But, we love works. Works make us feel better about ourselves, allow us to compare ourselves to others, to participate in our salvation. But all of that is contrary to the Gospel which is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

- Acts 15 – Gentiles do not have to keep the law to be Christians
- Galatians 2 – Everyone has a hard time separating works from grace

This is a life-or-death situation. A works-Gospel is not the Gospel, and it deceives people into thinking works can save them without trusting Jesus. No one is a Christian without Jesus. No one is going to heaven without Jesus.

Paul uses the events surrounding God's promise to Abraham as a prophetic allegory to demonstrate the failure of the law to save and God's promise to be trustworthy.

It's very clear to Paul that even the OT teaches this. And so he uses an analogy from the OT to help us better understand the difference between works and grace.

### TEXT:

*21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. 23 But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. 24 Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia;<sup>[e]</sup> she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written, "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband." 28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. 30 But what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." 31 So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.*

Introduction: Paul uses the events surrounding God's promise to Abraham as a prophetic allegory to demonstrate the failure of the law to save and God's promise to be trustworthy.

**First: Read the Law. 21**

People are easily misguided if they don't carefully read or understand what they profess to follow.

**Acts 15:10** – *Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?*

*Run, John, run, the law commands  
But gives us neither feet nor hands,  
Far better news the gospel brings:  
It bids us fly and gives us wings*

- John Bunyan (1685–1752)

*A rigid matter was the law,  
demanding brick, denying straw,  
But when with gospel tongue it sings,  
it bids me fly and gives me wings*

- Ralph Erskine (1685–1752)

*Run, John, and work, the law commands,  
yet finds me neither feet nor hands,  
But sweeter news the gospel brings,  
it bids me fly and lends me wings!*

- John Berridge (1716–1793)

Don't let the Old Testament spadework  
distract you from the New Testament jewel!

### **Second: Let me Tell you a Story. 22-23**

These women are:

- Abraham's wife Sarah (the free woman), and
- Sarah's maid Hagar (the slave woman).
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Sarah could not get pregnant, so she had her slave Hagar act as a surrogate. The child of this union was called Ishmael (Genesis 16:1-3, 15-16)

However, God told Abraham that Sarah herself would bear him a son called Isaac (Genesis 17:15-21). Ishmael is not the son through whom God intended to fulfil his 'seed' promise to Abraham.

Although they laughed at the promise yet, in their old age Sarah bore a son to Abraham (Genesis 21:1-5).

In this way, Abraham had two sons:

- One by the flesh – Hagar and Ishmael
- One by the Spirit – Sarah and Isaac
- 

23 – But the birth of Ishmael was simply the result of ordinary natural process. The birth of Isaac needed supernatural help and is the result of God's fulfilled promise.

### **Three: The Story is an Allegory of Two Covenants. 24-25**

As God unfolded his purpose and fulfilled his promises, he caused many things in the Old Testament to exist as symbols of things that would come to pass in latter days.

Certain people, places, objects, and events were "shadows" or "types" of things to come.

- The ark prefigures Jesus who keeps us safe in the storm of God's judgement
- Abraham's ram foreshadows Jesus who is the only sacrificed Son

In this way God reinforced his prophetic word and helped us to understand and believe the Bible story. Hagar and Sarah symbolize two covenants which have been discussed previously: In this story, Mount Sinai and Jerusalem in Israel represents the law

*25 - Hagar represents Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children".*

a) Hagar =. Sinai & "present" Jerusalem = the law which came through Moses

When Moses led God's people out of bondage in Egypt, and led them to Mount Sinai, he gave them the law. Eventually they came to Canaan and Jerusalem became the seat of Mosaic law. But through disobedience, Jerusalem was destroyed. A remnant of its exiles returned to rebuild it, but it was thereafter weak and oppressed by foreign powers.

Jerusalem's destruction is intended to teach the Jews a deeper lesson. They were under spiritual slavery to the law of Moses.

**3:23-25** – *Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. <sup>24</sup> So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,*

**4:3-7** - *I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave,<sup>[a]</sup> though he is the owner of everything, <sup>2</sup> but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his*

*father. <sup>3</sup>In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. <sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup>And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*

In this story, Hagar, the slave, symbolizes the covenant God gave through Moses and the physical and spiritual enslavement suffered under that law.

#### **Fourth: Don't Miss This! God is Building a New Jerusalem for a New People - 26-27**

These verses quote from Isaiah 54 which foretells the future glory of Zion.

Many Jews thought the earthly city of Jerusalem would be liberated and rise to world dominance.

Paul however interprets prophecy differently: there is a new Jerusalem —not an earthly city, but a 'Jerusalem which is above', a heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12:22-23 Revelation 3:12).

Although we live on earth just now, we belong to this heavenly city, and we are pilgrims going there (Philippians 3:20, Hebrews 11:8-10,16 13:14)

This is the place that Jesus has gone to prepare for us (John 14:2-3).

Sarah is a symbol of that heavenly place, because the right of residence in that place can be gained only through the one of whom her son Isaac was ancestor. Just as she was a free woman and her son was free, so those who gain entry to the city she symbolizes are free and are true sons in the house of our heavenly Father (John 8:31-43).

This is a difficult concept for the Jews to understand –

**John 8: 31-33** - So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” <sup>33</sup>They answered him, “We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, ‘You will become free?’”

In the same way, anyone who thinks the law can save them is denying reality.

#### **Fifth: This is What it All Means. 28**

Follow the spiritual line from Abraham to Jesus –

T – **Luke 3:23-34** – That spiritual line follows Jesus back to Abraham through Isaac, and not Ishmael.

**Romans 8:17** - ... *if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ*

What do we inherit? Salvation!

**Six: And this is the Application 29**

- a) Endure the flesh, the world and the devil – 29

**Gen 21 - T**

Genesis 21:9 - *And the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. <sup>9</sup> But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing (mocking)*

- b) Keep “casting off” the law. – 30

Genesis 21:10 - *So she said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.”*

- c) This is why it is so hard –

Genesis 21:11 - *And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son.*

- d) We need a word from God to help us

Genesis 21:12 - But God said to Abraham, “Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

- e) This is the promise we need to believe

Genesis 21:13 – And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.

- f) This is the faith we need to exercise

Genesis 21:14 - *So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away.*

**Seventh: Don’t Ever Forget This. 31**

*So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.*

### **Conclusion:**

The biblical story of Abraham, Hagar & Ishmael, Sarah, & Isaac, is a kind of real-life prophecy.

The women represent two covenants. Hagar symbolizes the covenant enacted on Mt Sinai. Sarah symbolizes the covenant of promise which God made to Abraham and brought to fulfillment in Christ.

In the same way, Hagar and Sarah represent two Jerusalem. The Jerusalem on earth, which became captured and enslaved, is represented by Hagar the bonds slave. The heavenly Jerusalem, which is free, is represented by Sarah, the free woman.

The bondswoman and her son were cast out foreshadowing the abolition of the Mosaic law. The free woman and her son were accepted, foreshadowing the acceptance of Jesus and his sacrifice as the basis for a new covenant of promise to us.

What, or Whom, are you trusting for salvation?

### **Community Groups:**

- 1 – What has been your greatest joy this week?
- 2 – What has been your greatest sorrow this week?
- 3 – How can your CG best pray for you?
- 4 – How is a ‘works’ Gospel, not the Gospel?
- 5 – What is the danger of a works Gospel?
- 6 - How is the law different from the Gospel? It cannot save.
- 7 – How does the law complement the Gospel? It leads us to Jesus.
- 8 – How is the law essential to the Gospel?
  - It proves us we are sinners
  - It makes us look elsewhere for salvation
- 9 – What does the law mean for the nonChristian versus the Christian?
  - Sinners use it to try to be saved
  - The Holy Spirit uses it to conform Christians to the image of Christ
- 10 – Which woman is the law and which woman is grace in Paul’s story?
- 11 – Which mountain is the law and which city is grace in Paul’s story?
- 12 – Which son represents the law and which son represents grace in Paul’s story?
- 13 – What’s the difference between ‘present’ Jerusalem and Jerusalem ‘above’?
- 14 – What does Jesus mean by “freedom” in John 8:33?

- 15 – According to verse 29, what is the application of this story?  
 16 – What is Paul’s conclusion, the point of the story, in verse 31?  
 17 – How do you struggle with a law/works salvation?

**(Don’t miss the chart on the next page)**

<b>Concept Chart</b>		
<b>MOTHER</b>	<b>Sarah</b>	<b>Hagar</b>
HER STATUS	Free	Slave
HER SON	Isaac	Ishmael
HIS STATUS	Persecuted	Persecutor
BORN BY	Promise	Flesh
<b>COVENANT</b>	<b>Gospel</b>	<b>The Law</b>
MEDIATOR	Jesus [God]	Moses [Man]
INHERITANCE	Heaven	Jerusalem
CULMINATION	Established	Abolished