

Galatians

Lesson 10

Sarah and Hagar

Galatians 4: 17-31 *They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.*

18 *It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you,*

19 *my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!*

20 *I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.*

Example of Hagar and Sarah

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; 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.*

Now, let's take a look at **Galatians 4: 17-31** *They make much of you, but for no good purpose. They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.*

18 *It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you,*

19 *my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!*

20 *I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.*

Verse 17a, They make much of you, but for no good purpose.

This is a direct reference to the legalistic Judaizers.

When I look at the Greek words for this passage of scripture, the paraphrase for this verse looks something like this, *"These legalistic Judaizers are eager to court you, but their intentions are not honorable."*

Verse 17b, They want to shut you out, that you may make much of them.

Once again, a good paraphrase would be, *"They are trying to woo you away from us in order to win your affection for themselves."*

Paul likens the Judaizers to adulterers who try to seduce people from their mate into becoming involved in an extramarital affair.

He is trying to warn the Galatians not to be misled by the false words because their goal is selfish; it's as if they want to destroy the relationship that the Galatians have with the Lord.

Verse 18, It is always good to be made much of for a good purpose, and not only when I am present with you,

Paul is saying that it is fine when you are being courted by someone when their intentions are good.

Paul wants someone to court them who preaches his same message.



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Verse 19, my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!

Here, Paul is addressing these Galatians as though they were unbelievers, saying that he is in, “***anguish of childbirth,***” (praying strongly), to bring them to New Birth.

This isn't what he means.

The problem is that they have turned away from the Word of God and have slipped into legalistic works.

This should be a lesson for all of us.

Just because a person accepts Christ as their Savior does not mean that we can stop praying for them.

Remember that Paul prayed for the Ephesians after he heard of their faith in Jesus Christ. (***Ephesians 1: 15***)

Verse 20, I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you.

In this letter, Paul has not been gentle with these people.

In fact, he has been harsh in his dealings with them.

He has consistently rebuked them for their foolishness and error.

Now, he is making it clear that he doesn't like to speak to them in that tone of voice.

However, he is making it clear that he has done so because he has real doubts about their commitment.

Now, let's take a look at ***Verses 21-23***, and then we will break it down further.



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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.

Verse 21, Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

In this verse, the word, “**listen**”, means, “*understand.*”

Here in **Verse 21**, Paul begins to introduce chapter 5 in which he will emphasize two themes: freedom in Christ and life in the Spirit.

He begins by asking the Galatians an important question, “*You who want to be under the Law, don’t you understand the Law?*”

Paul has just a great deal of time talking about the Law, because Paul knows that there is a big difference between knowing about the Law, and fully understanding the Law.

It’s possible to have knowledge of something and still never understand the meaning of it.

For example, how many orthodox Jews today fully understand the Law they are so careful to observe?

How many of them realize that everything in it, points to Jesus Christ?

This is nothing new.

Look at **John 5: 39** ***You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,***

The scribes and Pharisees knew the Law perfectly.

They kept it in minute detail.



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Yet they missed the whole point of it.

The Law could not save them, it could only point them to their Savior.

Verses 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.

Here Paul begins to unfold to the Galatians what the Law was all about.

To explain the Law and its purpose, he goes all the way back to the time of Abraham who live 430 years before the Law ever came into existence.

He uses the two sons of Abraham as examples of Law and grace, or the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit.

Sarah and Hagar

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; 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."

Verse 24a, Now this may be interpreted allegorically

When Paul refers to the two offspring of Abraham and reveals that their story can be interpreted allegorically, he means they are an analogy.

They represent something beyond themselves.

We know this true because Abraham himself represented something far more lasting than he ever imagined in his own lifetime.

Here's how this works, Abraham is a type of the individual believer.

The two women living in his tent with him are a type of the two messages to which the believer is exposed and can exercise their free will to devote himself.

The free woman, Sarah, symbolizes grace or the promise of God.

The slave woman, Hagar, symbolizes the Law.

So, in the story of the relationship between these three Old Testament figures and their offspring, we see symbolically, and more clearly about the conflict between the Law and grace.

By faith in Christ, you and I became participants in the Abrahamic covenant.

So, this means that the things that affected him still affect us today because he is a representation of us.

Although the Law did not come into existence until 430 years later, Abraham had a type of the Law with him right there in his tent.

Her name was Hagar.

But he also had a type of grace living in his tent and her name was Sarah.

From which of these two are you and I descended from?

To answer that question, let's consider these two women separately.

First, what was Hagar's position in the family?

She was a slave.

What was her place of birth?



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She was Egyptian.

What was Egypt a type of in the Old Testament?

Egypt represented exile and slavery, our life as unbelievers.

Before we were saved, we were living in a spiritual Egypt.

We were exiled from God and held in bondage, slaves to sin.

Then there came a day when we crossed the Red Sea, a type of the blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when we walked out of bondage into liberty.

Our enemies were cut off from us, washed away by the blood of Jesus.

We walked away free people.

As we traveled, we had to do some growing up, some maturing.

Following the Lord, we crossed the Jordan and entered the Promised land of the life of faith.

Like the Israelites, when we left Egypt, we brought some of it with us.

Like Abraham, we had with us in our tent, (body), not only our Sarah of grace, we also had our Hagar of the Law.

Our Hagar is the flesh which we must dominate with Spirit for as long as we live in this fleshly body.

In the case of Abraham, although he was promised offspring through Sarah, representing the Spirit, he became impatient and had a child with Hagar.

This child's name was Ishmael.

Later, Abraham had a son with Sarah named Isaac.



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There were two sets of offspring by Abraham, those of the flesh and those of the Spirit.

Like father Abraham, we too have a choice of which two women we will unite ourselves with.

Look at ***Romans 8: 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.***

Notice that these two states of mind produce two clearly different outcomes, one produces death and the other produces life and peace.

So, our choice in this matter determines the offspring or fruit that will be produced in our life.

The fruit of our choices does not always end with the first generation.

It has the ability to go on reproducing itself.

The fruit Abraham produced through Hagar and Sarah kept on multiplying itself.

Ismael produced a race in the natural, the Arabs.

Isaac also produced a natural race, the Jews.

However, he also produced a spiritual race, the redeemed.

One is temporary, though the Arabs have been around for thousands of years now.

The other offspring, the redeemed, is eternal and will last forever and ever.

The Two Sons

Verse 24b One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar.

This is an awesome revelation!

Hagar, as we already know, represents the Old Covenant that was to Moses on Mt. Sinai, which is in Arabia.

The Law was not given in the Promised land, it originated in Arabia which means the land of cursing.

Interesting, don't you think?

Verse 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

To provide clarity to this passage of scripture, let's look specifically at what Paul was saying.

He is comparing Hagar to the condition of the Jews in Jerusalem at the time this letter was written by Paul.

The Jews in Jerusalem were under physical bondage because they were under the yoke of the Roman Empire and they were under spiritual bondage because of the yoke of the Law.

I want to digress for a moment to revisit the concept of fathering two different races of people.

Understanding that Hagar was the mother of the Arabs is pretty straight forward and easy to understand.

However, in the case of Abraham's son, Isaac, it is a little more complicated.

As you may recall, we stated that Isaac went on to be the father of two different types of people, one, a physical race, the Jews, and the other an eternal race, the redeemed.

Let's examine this a little more and see if God will help us with this.

Look at **Romans 9: 6-13** *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, 7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring. 9 For this is what the promise said: “About this time next year I will return, and Sarah shall have a son.” 10 And not only so, but also when Rebekah had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, 11 though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad—in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls— 12 she was told, “The older will serve the younger.” 13 As it is written, “Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.”*

Listen carefully, contrary to what this says, God did not hate Esau the way that you might think.

First, God did not hate Esau and love Jacob without cause.

Even before they were born, God could look ahead and see their lives.

Through foreknowledge, He was aware of the faith of that was resident in Jacob and the unbelief that would motivate Esau.

So, the way I see it, God did not hate Esau personally, He hated the unbelief He stood for.

Just the same as the fact that God did not love Jacob so much personally (certainly not his actions or his human nature), God loved the faith Jacob represented.

So, when Paul speaks of the two offspring of Isaac here, he is doing more than examining their individual personal lives.

He is using the two to symbolize the two types of people in the world: 1) those, like Esau, who doubt and disbelieve, and 2) those like Jacob, who, though far from perfect humanly speaking, yet are counted righteous by God because of their faith in Him.

This same analogy applies to Isaac and Ishmael.

They represent two entirely different heritages.

Ishmael was Abraham's idea and Isaac was God's idea.

That's why Ishmael had no part in the inheritance that was left for Isaac.

This is what Paul was referring to when he says that not all of Israel (the natural seed of Abraham) are part of true Israel (the spiritual seed of Abraham).

The Two Mountains

Verse 26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

In ***Verses 24 and 25***, we saw that Mount Sinai represented the giving of the Law.

It came to be identified with those that who held to the Law and rejected Jesus Christ, and the promises of God.

So, Mount Sinai represents legalism which is bondage.

According to Paul, the Old Jerusalem of the natural Jews, is an example of bondage in which those people live, who look to the Law for their justification.

Since justification comes not by works of the Law, but by faith in the promises of God, the true Israel is made up of all those who look to Him for their redemption.

Their holy city is not an earthly habitation built by hands of men; it is the New Jerusalem, which ***Hebrews 11: 10*** tells us, is above.

So, the center of Jerusalem is Mount Zion.



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It is to this mountain that Israel looks for deliverance.

But the true Mount Zion, like the true Jerusalem is not a natural or physical place, it's a spiritual place.

Just as Mount Sinai corresponds to the Old Jerusalem, the earthly Jerusalem, Mount Zion corresponds to the New Jerusalem, the heavenly Jerusalem.

Look at **Hebrews 12: 18-24** *For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest*

19 and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them.

20 For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned."

21 Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear."

22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering,

23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

What mountain was it that Moses stood before in the midst of thunder and lightning and darkness.

It was Mount Sinai, where the Law was given.

But you and I have not come to that mountain.

We came to Mount Zion when we married Sarah.

Remember this, faith always connects a person with His promises.

Verse 27a *For it is written,*

This expression is in reference to **Isaiah 54: 1** *"Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in labor!"*



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For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her who is married,” says the LORD.

Verse 27b “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor.

The barren here refers to Sarah.

She was told by the Lord to break forth into singing and rejoicing before she had even gotten pregnant.

And why was she to be rejoicing when she was still barren?

Verse 27c For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.”

Sarah was told to rejoice because God had made her a promise.

Her joy was not to be based on what she saw with her eyes, but on what she was told by God.

Look at ***Romans 10: 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.***

Faith knows that what God promises He provides.

Verses 28 -31 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.

Look closely at ***Verse 28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.***



Even though we are not Jews, we are the children of promise.

The children of promise include all the redeemed all over the world.

Verse 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.

This is a specific reference by Paul to the fact that Isaac, the son of promise, the son born after the Spirit of God, was persecuted by Ishmael, the natural son, born after the flesh.

God's people have always been the objects of persecution by the unsaved.

Verse 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."

This a quote from ***Genesis 21: 9-14 But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing.***

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."

11 And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son.

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.

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

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. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

Notice that Abraham really did not want to send Ishmael away.

After all, he was Abraham's son.

Abraham's feelings reflect our own.

Often, we don't want to put away the seed of our carnal nature for the seed of our spiritual nature.

We want to hang on to our fleshly nature because it seems to be a vital part of us.

It doesn't go unnoticed that Abraham was not only required to give up his son Ishmael, he was also required to give up Hagar.

Abraham was ordered by God to give up both, not one and keep the other.

Verse 31 So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

We have been set free from the curse of the Law to live in the blessing of Abraham.



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