

**Ga 4:21–31 (ESV)** Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? <sup>(22)</sup> For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. <sup>(23)</sup> But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. <sup>(24)</sup> Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. <sup>(25)</sup> Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. <sup>(26)</sup> But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. <sup>(27)</sup> 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.” <sup>(28)</sup> Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. <sup>(29)</sup> 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. <sup>(30)</sup> 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.” <sup>(31)</sup> So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

### 1. In this world there are only 2 kinds of religion

- A. There is religion based on human works and merit – every religion but Christianity
  - 1). The emphasis is on what I do for God to earn His love and acceptance
- B. Then there is Christianity – based on faith rather than works
  - 1). I’m not accepted because of what I do for God – it’s based on what God did for me
  - 2). I’m accepted and blessed the moment I trust in the finished work of Christ on my behalf

### 2. Galatians had started out correctly – trusting in Christ alone

- A. But these legalist came along confused them - “Faith is good but it is not enough”
  - 1). To be right with God you must also add your own works  
You must trust in Christ PLUS obey the law – all those rules, rituals of Judaism

**Transition:** We have seen in Galatians that Paul has written to confront this error

### 3. The purpose of the passage in front of us

- A. Paul is making a final comparison between law and grace
  - 1). He is going to use Abraham’s two sons – Ishmael and Isaac  
To show us the difference between trusting in Christ’s work and trusting in our own

### 4. Outline

- A. The two sons
- B. The two mothers
- C. The application

## I. THE TWO SONS

### 1. Paul opens with a searching question

**Ga 4:21 (ESV)** Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

- A. You who want to be under the law. Do you understand what the law says?
  - 1). If you understood what it is saying – you wouldn’t want to be under it  
“No person can be justified by the works of the law – you must keep it all perfectly”

**Transition:** He is going to us Abraham’s sons to show how illogical this choice would be

### Abraham’s Two Sons

**Ga 4:22–23 (ESV)** For it is written that Abraham had two sons (**Ishmael the oldest. Isaac the youngest**), one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. <sup>(23)</sup> But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

**Intro:** Both these sons had similarities – Abraham was their father  
But they also had significant differences – that is what Paul will bring out

### 1. First difference: They had different mothers

- A. Ishmael’s mother was Hagar – a slave woman

- B. Isaac's mother was Sarah – a free woman
  - 1). Each boy took after their mother – Ishmael born into slavery – Isaac into freedom

## 2. Second difference: They were born in different ways

The biological process was the same but the circumstances were different

**Ga 4:23 (ESV)** But the son of the slave was born *according to the flesh*, while the son of the free woman was *born through promise*.

- A. Ishmael was born in the ordinary way – according to nature – nothing supernatural
- B. Isaac's birth was not natural but supernatural and miraculous
  - 1). Abraham and Sarah were beyond the age of bearing children naturally
  - 2). Isaac was the result of Abraham simply trusting in the promise of God

**Heb 11:11 (NIV)** By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father *because he considered him faithful who had made the promise*.

- a). Abraham simply believed that God would do what He said He would do

**Transition:** Before we move on – we don't want to miss a vital lesson here – *the flesh principle*

- A. When a believer takes matters out of God's hands and tries to work it out on their own

## The Flesh Principle

**Ga 4:23 (ESV)** But the son of the slave was *born according to the flesh...*

### 1. God had promised Abraham and Sarah a child

- A. The **PROBLEM:** God didn't fulfill His promise quickly enough
  - 1). So Sarah decides to take matters into her own hands – help God out a bit
- B. The **PLAN:** She suggests Abraham sleep with her Egyptian maidservant Hagar
  - 1). If she got pregnant – Sarah would take the child and raise it as her own
    - a). A common practice – *she is trying to do God's work in the world's ways*
  - 2). Hagar did get pregnant – gave birth to Ishmael in a normal way – but not in God's way
    - a). But this was a child brought about by the flesh
    - b). Brought about by man's scheming – rather than in trusting in God's promise

- C. The **PAYOFF:** Works of the flesh promise so much but deliver so little

**Watch what happens: Gen 16:4 (NIV)** He (Abraham) slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, *she began to despise her mistress*.

- 1). Later after Isaac is born - Ishmael begins to mock Sarah and Isaac – despising them
- 2). I feel so many times when I've gotten into the flesh
  - What I produce ends up mocking me! Just causes so much trouble
    - a). Because I didn't trust God – His promises – His plan – *His timing*
- 3). Eventually Hagar and Ishmael are so much trouble they must be sent away
  - a). Abraham is forced to clean up the mess – *never easy – usually painful*  
Imagine Abraham's pain as he has to send away his own son

- D. The **POINT:** It's never worth it to step outside of God's will and God's timing

- 1). He knows what He's doing – and He knows the best way to get it done – resting in this takes faith

**Transition:** What do we have so far?

- A. Ishmael was born in a natural way – nothing ordinary at all  
Isaac was born in a supernatural way – a result of God's promise
- B. These two boys represent two kinds of ways of approaching God – let's look at that

## The Illustration Explained

### 1. Ishmael represents legalism and self-effort (works of the flesh)

- A. All the things man can accomplish without God – that is mere religion

### **Isaac illustrates faith in God's ability and His promises**

- A. Trusting that God will do what He promised to do – Trusting in what He said He would accomplish

## **2. Ishmael was born in a natural way**

- A. He represents all who have experienced ONLY the natural birth – not second birth from above

- 1). He was born into slavery and represents all who are in bondage to any system of works
- 2). Those who are trying to earn God's acceptance through their own performance

### **Isaac was born as a fulfillment of a promise of God**

- A. He represents all those who have experienced the second birth – born again by faith in Christ

- B. He was born into freedom and symbolizes all who are free in Christ

- 1). All who have free access to God because of what His Son has done
- 2). All who have freedom from the guilt of a record of sin

**Point:** Every one is either an Ishmael or an Isaac

- A. If you have not gone to God through faith in Christ you are still an Ishmael

- 1). Basing your eternity on who you are and what you do – *but you still fall short!*

**Transition:** Now Paul takes us to the two mothers of these boys

- A. Likens those who have only been born in an ordinary way to having Hagar as their mother

Those who are born in a supernatural way (born again) as having Sarah as their mother

- B. Be warned these are some difficult verses

## **II. TWO MOTHERS**

**Ga 4:24 (ESV)** Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants...

### **1. Each of these women represent a different covenant And therefore an entirely different spiritual experience**

#### **Defining some terms: Allegory and Covenant**

We throw these around – but do we understand them

#### **1. Allegory:**

- A. A story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning
- 1). Pilgrims Progress – famous allegory – a story, picture of the spiritual journey
- B. Paul says these two women are a picture that can be used to explain spiritual truths
- 1). Truths about the two covenants and the spiritual experience flowing out of them

#### **2. Covenant: The Bible is made up of two – old and new covenant**

**John Stott:** A covenant is a solemn agreement between God and men, by which He makes them His people and promises to be their God. God established the old covenant through Moses and the new covenant through Christ, whose blood ratified it. The old (Mosaic) covenant was *based on law*; but the new (Christian) covenant, foreshadowed through Abraham and foretold through Jeremiah, is *based on promises. In the law God laid the responsibility on men and said 'thou shalt..., thou shalt not...; but in the promise God keeps the responsibility Himself and says 'I will..., I will...''*

**Transition:** I like the second one a lot better – let's see how Paul uses the lives of these two women

**Hagar:** Represents the Old covenant of law  
and the corresponding spiritual experience would be slavery

**Ga 4:24–25 (ESV)** Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. <sup>(25)</sup> Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

### 1. Hagar represents the old covenant = the law

- A. That is Paul refers to Mount Sinai = that is where the law was given
  - 1). That system of earning God's acceptance and blessing through our own effort
  - 2). A system that could never bring you into a place of rest and joy – always trying to earn

**Notice very important statement: Ga 4:25 (ESV)** Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia...

- A. Where was Mt. Sinai? In Arabia *outside the promised land* – in the wilderness

**Point:** A system based on your works leaves you outside of God's promises

### 2. The spiritual experience this covenant produces = slavery

**We have two things we need to see here**

**Ga 4:25 (ESV)** Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

- A. She corresponds to the *present Jerusalem*
  - 1). In these days when you thought of the law you thought of Jerusalem  
Jerusalem was the capital city of the Jews where Judaism (the law) reigned
  - 2). Judaism is a religious system based on man's work – trying to earn God's favor
- B. What that produces: For she is in *slavery with her children*
  - 1). The resulting experience of relating to God through works is one of a slave not a son
  - 2). You have this law – these rules always condemning you – hanging over you  
If you relate to God through works – He scares you – He seems mean and harsh
    - a). He always seems ready to hit you – hurt you – why?  
You're viewing Him through the law – which is designed to condemn NOT comfort
  - 3). You end up serving Him out of fear – reluctantly – not joyfully
    - a). Just like the slave who serves because he is afraid of being beat

**Transition:** Now Paul quotes from Isaiah 54:1 to show the superiority of the new covenant

- A. This speaks of the “desolate (barren) woman” = in this case that would be Sarah

## Sarah: Represents new covenant of grace.

### The corresponding spiritual experience would be freedom

**Ga 4:26–27 (ESV)** But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. <sup>(27)</sup> 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 (Sarah) will be more than those of the one who has a husband.”

### 1. Sarah represents the new covenant of grace

- A. A covenant not based on what we do for God but on what He has done for us
- B. This brings rest because it is based on Christ's FINISHED work – all that is necessary is done

### 2. The spiritual experience of grace is freedom

**Ga 4:26–27 (ESV)** But the Jerusalem above is free...

- A. Jerusalem above is heaven – the capital city of the Christian where grace reigns
- B. The spiritual experience is not of the slave serving out of fear – but the son serving freely from love
  - 1). We don't serve to keep our master from beating us  
We serve because we have a Father who will never stop loving us - grace
    - a). His love motivates us to want to please Him – want to be with Him

### 3. The point: There is the earthly and there is the heavenly

- A. Everybody is either like Ishmael or like Isaac
  - 1). If you're trying to earn God's acceptance by works  
You're like Ishmael outside of the blessings of God – shut out of heaven
  - 2). If you have trusted in Christ and His work alone you are like Isaac
    - a). Christ has brought you into the presence of God – all the blessings are yours
    - b). You will be in heaven with Him – the New Jerusalem

**Transition:** The next verse is difficult – let me tell you what I think it is

#### 4. The superiority of the new covenant of grace

**Ga 4:27 (ESV)** 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.”

- A. Let's work this out: Sarah is the woman who represents grace but was barren (desolate) for so long  
Hagar is likened to the woman who represented the law bore her child before Sarah
- B. For a while it seemed like Hagar was more fruitful in child bearing than Sarah
  - 1). At the time of this writing it seemed that Judaism was more powerful than Christianity
    - a). Judaism had its city – while the Christians were being scattered
    - b). Judaism had its beautiful temple – while the Christians met in homes etc.
- C. But Paul says the children of the barren woman = Sarah (who represents grace – promise)  
Will be more than the one who has a husband = Hagar and the law (works of the flesh)
  - 1). This new Christianity would grow until the promise given to Abraham was fulfilled  
That world would be blessed through his offspring – Jesus Christ

**Point:** In the end Christianity and covenant of grace will have many more children than what is produced by law

- A. It was a prediction that Christianity would dwarf Judaism and it has

#### 5. The allegory summed up

- A. Abraham had two sons - Ishmael and Isaac  
Who were born of two mothers - Hagar and Sarah  
Who represented two covenants – the old and the new
- B. Hagar the slave represents the old covenant – the earthly Jerusalem
  - 1). Approaching God through our own works – which leads to a life of fear – obedience as the slave
- C. Sarah the free woman represents the new covenant of grace and the heavenly Jerusalem
  - 1). Here we approach God through the perfect finished work of Christ on our behalf
  - 2). This leads to a life of freedom – enjoying God – enjoying His acceptance and love
    - a). Our service is motivated by that love – it produces a desire to please Him
  - 3). Law – legalism keeps pushing us away from God – we never feel like we've done enough  
Grace keeps drawing us near – assuring us that Christ work was sufficient

**Transition:** Paul now brings us to some interesting applications

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### III. APPLICATION

**Ga 4:28 (ESV)** Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

#### 1. Believers are like Isaac not Ishmael

- A. If we are like Isaac we should expect to be treated like he was

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**We Can Expect Persecution (here it is from a very unusual source)**

**Ga 4:29 (ESV)** 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.

### 1. At the ceremony in which Isaac was weaned

A. Scripture tells us Ishmael mocked and ridiculed his little half-brother Isaac

1). OTW Isaac was the object of Ishmael's scorn and hate

**Thought:** Remember what the allegory (the picture) is here

**Ishmael** = religion based on works. **Isaac** = Relationship with God based on Grace

A. It's always been this way – when we sent missionaries out at PCH

1). Their main problem came from the organized religion not the average man or woman

B. The church (believer) that stands for truth today will be mocked, ridiculed by other so-called believers

1). They will call you haters if you say homosexuality is not right

They will call you old fashioned if you say that sex before marriage is against God's law

2). The legalists will mock you if you simply enjoy Christ – resting in His work alone

**Stott:** It has always been so. The Lord Jesus was bitterly opposed, rejected, mocked and condemned by His own nation. The fiercest opponents of the apostle Paul, who dogged his footsteps and stirred up strife against him, were the official church, the Jews. The monolithic structure of the medieval papacy persecuted all Protestant minorities with ruthless, unremitting ferocity. And the greatest enemies of the evangelical faith today are not unbelievers, who when they hear the gospel often embrace it, but the church, the establishment, the hierarchy. Isaac is always mocked and persecuted by Ishmael.

**Point:** So we will be hit with a one-two punch in these last days – from the world and from the church

A. The sinful world and the compromised church will both call you a hater for standing for truth

**Transition:** This brings us to our next point

## We're All Faced with A Decision

### 1. For those who want grace plus law – God says choose like Abraham had too

A. Abraham had a son of the flesh who was mocking a son of the promise

B. Look at the decision he had to make

**Ga 4:30 (ESV)** But what does the Scripture say? *“Cast out the slave woman and her son...”*

**Point:** We must recognize the incompatibility of a system based on the work of man for God

And a system based on resting in the work of God for man

A. You are to get rid of Ishmael's religion – based on human merit to earn God's favor

You must embrace Isaac's religion – based on faith in the promises of God – faith in Christ's work

B. We will have works but not to earn salvation – they are a fruit of being saved

Not to earn God's love – but because we are so loved in Christ – we want to serve Him

1). Because we have a changed heart – that is wired to be zealous for good works

**Transition:** Look what happens when we do come by faith

## Those Who Come by Faith Become Inheritors

**Ga 4:30 (ESV)** 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.”*

### 1. The son of the slave woman was cast out from all the blessings of God

A. No one outside the covenant of grace – through faith in Christ will inherit salvation from God

B. If you are relying on your works – no matter how good you've been – you aren't good enough

1). No matter how moral – honest – generous – kind – you've fallen short of what God requires

2). I've always gone to church – fine – but have you gone to God through His Son Jesus Christ?

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- a). Have you humbled yourself – admitting you have sinned – you have failed  
Have you asked Him to save you – to forgive you? It is the only way

## 2. Then Paul sums it all up

**Ga 4:31 (ESV)** So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

- A. You were not born of the slave woman – you came in correctly - NOW LIVE LIKE IT
  - 1). Cast out this religion based on works – that is man’s way - rest in the grace of God
  - 2). Rest in the truth that you’re accepted by God because of what Jesus has done
    - a). Quit trying to earn what you already have – there is no joy there

**Transition:** Enjoy the freedom you have in Christ – next week we’ll look at what it means to live free

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## CONCLUSION

### 1. Have seen that Abraham's two sons and their two mothers

- A. Stand for the two covenants - old and new
- B. And for the two new Jerusalem's - earthly and heavenly

### 2. Have also looked at what those covenants represent

- A. The old = Law and bondage - that leaves you outside of God's blessings
- B. The new = Grace and freedom - that brings you into God's blessings

**Question:** Are you an Isaac or an Ishmael tonight?

- A. Are you trusting in what you do for God to save you - keep you acceptable to God = Ishmael
- B. Are you trusting in what God has done for you in His Son = Isaac
  - 1). That He has done for you what you could never do for yourself - make you righteous
- C. If you are trusting in your own works you are outside the blessings of God
  - 1). There is only one way – cast out legalism – cast out mere religion  
Learn to rest in grace – and glory in the relationship that opens up to you

**IF YOU NEED PRAYER – NORM WILL BE COMING UP**