

## Law and Grace

### Galatians 4:21-31

Paul is perplexed by believers of Galatia--*I can't figure you out*, you became free from the bondage of idol worship when you believed in Christ by faith but now you want to go back to a life of bondage of OT legalism.

*21 Tell me, you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law?*

He illustrates by using the allegory of Abraham--two women one his **wife** the other a **handmaid** and two sons, one of the flesh, **Ishmael** and other by promise **Isaac**. Stands for 2 covenants one of bondage the other freedom

**W Wiersbe** Since the Judaizers appealed to the Law, Paul accepts their challenge and uses the Law to prove that Christians are not under the Law. He takes the familiar story of Ishmael and Isaac ([Gen. 16–21](#)) and draws from it basic truths about the Christian's relationship to the Law of Moses. The events described actually happened, but Paul uses them as an allegory, which is a narrative that has a deeper meaning behind it.

*22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. 23 But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise.*

*Bondwoman* refers to Sarah's Egyptian handmaid **Hagar**. Sarah convinced Abraham **God's promise of a son** was in jeopardy because she was too old--take **Hagar** and I'll adopt child as my own so God's word can be fulfilled. Paul doesn't mention Ishmael's name who was born out of the fleshly plan of Abraham & Sarah. *Free woman* is Sarah who 13 years later bore the promise son **Isaac**.

Ishmael signifies man seeking to fulfill what God promised & only He can fulfill—It is the difference between works of man & faith in God. Promises of God come to pass miraculously not ordinarily by our help *according to the flesh...*

We make it hard on ourselves & others trying to do the work & will of God by our own efforts. He will let us spin our wheels produce our Ishmaels until exhausted & made a mess of things & He steps in to clean things up, teaching us to wait for Him & trust His timing.

## **Law and Grace** **Galatians 4:21-31**

These two sons not only had spiritual significance but this work of the flesh produced political consequences as well—the animosity between Isaac and Ishmael gave rise to the **Arab-Israeli conflict** which has gone on for 4000 years & will continue to be a troubled area until Jesus returns!

Sometimes God's promises are so great we imagine we must help Him to bring them to pass and at that point we just get in the way. So at 75 God promised Abraham land & seed **Gen 12:1-9**; At 85 impatience produced Ishmael according to flesh **Gen 16:1-3**; At 99 God renews promise son thru Sarah **Gen 18:9-15**; At 100/90 Isaac born **Gen 21:1-7**; At 103 Ishmael mocked Isaac—Hagar and son cast out **Gen 21: 8-14**

*24 This is allegorically speaking: for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. 25 Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in **Arabia**, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.*

A covenant is an agreement between two parties—*Mt Sinai* place God issues His law. A terrifying experience for the people Ex 19:12-21 Heb 12:20-21....Warning don't go near or touch mountain or you die-symbol of the law & to break it you die, thus slavery to law because you can't keep it

Hagar a symbol of work of the flesh & refers to Mt Sinai the law matching or corresponds to Jerusalem of the day--**Judaizers** who were slaves to the law were leading Galatian believers into their false system. *Arabia* because it is where Ishmael resided-desert areas unlike **God's promise land flowing w/ milk and honey**. Any who seek to come to God by works of the flesh are related to the system of Hagar Ishmael Sinai, present Jerusalem which produces slavery—which is legalism

This would infuriate these false teachers Paul because they despised & rejected Hagar & Ishmael but Paul says that's who you are spiritually.

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### Galatians 4:21-31

*26 But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother. 27 For it is written, "REJOICE, BARREN WOMAN WHO DOES NOT BEAR; BREAK FORTH AND SHOUT, YOU WHO ARE NOT IN LABOR; FOR MORE ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE DESOLATE THAN OF THE ONE WHO HAS A HUSBAND."*

Sarah a type of new covenant, *Jerusalem above*, from which Christ came, a covenant of grace & promise—*our present possession*. We experience a new way of living—it is in freedom by power of Holy Spirit—not works of flesh which is spiritual slavery. *Ehp 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ*

Paul points to scripture to validate his point & uses Sarah as a type-in book of *Isaiah 54:1 "Shout for joy, O barren one, you who have borne no child; Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; For the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous Than the sons of the married woman," says the LORD.*

Prophecy of Israel's captivity & restoration from Babylonian w/ the view that later years the blessing would be greater than former.

MacArthur Isaiah's words comforted the Jewish exiles in Babylon, giving them the prophetic hope that they as a nation would not only be restored (they did return from exile but this was only a partial fulfillment of God's promise), but that their future blessings would be greater than any in the past

*Barren woman* in Paul's allegory is *Sarah* who for many years was infertile until God fulfilled His promise by her giving birth to Isaac. We, like Sarah, wait for God's blessing & His timing. By faith abide in Christ & He will bear much fruit in our life. And like Sarah, we *rejoice well & mind* a-new outlook, nature, disposition comes w/ personal sense of victory in this life in Christ

*28 And you brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 But as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. 30 But what does the Scripture say? "CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON, FOR THE SON OF THE BONDWOMAN SHALL NOT BE AN HEIR WITH THE SON OF THE FREE WOMAN."*

**Law and Grace****Galatians 4:21-31**

Not natural birth as Ishmael but by promise, Isaac, born again of the Spirit a work of God no longer enslaved to old life, old covenant of law.

John MacArthur "Every believer, like Isaac, is supernaturally conceived, miraculously born, and the offspring of God's promise to Abraham fulfilled in Christ. Those who have begun to sink back into the trap of legalistic Judaism must remember that they are children of promise, who owe their life not to their own effort but to the miraculous power of God, just as Isaac did in the physical realm. God's sovereign power of grace gave them life, and to fall back under law was to deny that divine work and to dishonor God."

***Gen 21:8 And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham held a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. 9 Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking Isaac.***

***Mocking***, laughing—not w/ but at, make sport of, to scorn, entertained by bullying one viewed as less than you-repeatedly. Like mother-like son ***Gen 16:5 When HAGAR saw that she had conceived SARAH was despised in her sight***

Judaizers like Ishmael constantly persecuted Paul—those born of flesh-legalistic-A self-effort religion persecute true born again believers of faith.

James Montgomery Boice **the persecution Christians face will not always be by the world but also & indeed more often by their half-brothers--the unbelieving but religious people in the nominal church. This is the lesson of history. Today the greatest enemies of the believing church are found among the members of the unbelieving church, the greatest opposition emanating from pulpits & church hierarchies.**

John Stott **The Lord Jesus was bitterly opposed, rejected, mocked & condemned by His own nation. The fiercest opponents of the apostle Paul, who dogged his footsteps & stirred up strife against him, were the official church, the Jews. The monolithic structure of the medieval papacy persecuted all Protestant minorities w/ 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 & persecuted by Ishmael.**

Cast out sounds hard core but there is no compromise—legalism kills grace in the life of a believer-Sarah & Hagar couldn't live together---law & grace can't either. Do it now, get rid of the legalists, cast them out of fellowship.

**W Wiersbe**-Individual churches & Christians can make the same mistake the Galatians were making: they can fail to cast out Hagar & Ishmael. Legalism is one of the major problems among Christians today. We must keep in mind that legalism does not mean the setting of spiritual standards; it means worshiping these standards & thinking that we are spiritual because we obey them. It also means judging other believers on the basis of these standards. A person can refrain from smoking, drinking, & attending theaters, for example, & still not be spiritual. The Pharisees had high standards; yet they crucified Jesus. The old nature loves legalism, because it gives the old nature a chance to “look good.” It costs very little for Ishmael not to do certain bad things, or to do certain religious deeds, just so long as he can remain Ishmael. For 17 years Ishmael caused no trouble in the home; & then Isaac came along, & there was conflict. Legalism caters to Ishmael. The Christian who claims to be spiritual because of what he doesn’t do is only fooling himself. It takes more than negations to make a positive, fruitful spiritual life. No doubt the Judaizers were attractive people. They carried credentials from religious authorities. They had high standards & were careful in what they ate & drank. They were effective in making converts & liked to advertise their accomplishments. They had rules & standards to cover every area of life, making it easy for their followers to know who was “spiritual” & who was not. But the Judaizers were leading the people into bondage & defeat, not liberty & victory, & the people did not know the difference. In the closing chapters of this letter, Paul will point out the greatest tragedy of legalism: it gives opportunity for the flesh to work. The old nature cannot be controlled by Law; eventually it has to break out— & when it does, watch out! This explains why legalistic religious groups often have fights & divisions “ye fight and devour one another,” [Gal. 5:15](#), & often are plagued w/ the defiling sins of the flesh. While every church has its share of these problems, it is especially prominent in those groups where there is an atmosphere of legalism. When you invite Hagar & Ishmael to live w/ Sarah & Isaac, you are inviting trouble. Thank God, the Christian is set free from the curse of the Law & the control of the Law. “Cast out the bondwoman & her son.” It may pain us deeply, as it did Abraham; but it must be done. To attempt to mix Law & grace is to attempt the impossible. It makes for a frustrated, barren Christian life. But to live by grace, through faith, gives one a free & fulfilling Christian life. What is the secret? The Holy Spirit. And it is this secret that Paul will share in the closing “practical” chapters of the letter. Meanwhile, you & I need to beware lest Ishmael & Hagar have crept back into our lives. If they have let us cast them out.

***31 So then, brethren, we are not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman.***