

## Galatians 4:21-31

Lesson 9: *Hagar and Sarah, Et Cetera*

21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

24 These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband."

28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. 30 But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son." 31 Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

***Ishmael and his mother*****▲ A sad story**

Galatians 4:22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

- ▶ ***Ishmael was born in the ordinary way – Abram capitulated on the promise***
- ▶ ***Ishmael was born in the ordinary way – Abram commandeered the process***

1. The story of Hagar and Ishmael exists because Abraham was impatient with the promise of God and took matters into his own hands to produce a son.
2. The primary story is recorded in Genesis chapters 16 and 21, and further information about Ishmael's lineage is recorded in the surrounding chapters.
3. Paul's use of this story as a spiritual metaphor is mixed with a variety of other metaphors relating to Jerusalem, Mount Sinai, the covenants, and slavery.
  - ▼ BC2060+/- Hagar births Ishmael ——— ▼ BC1440+/- Moses receives the Law at Sinai ——— ▼ BC1007+/- King David moves to Jerusalem
4. The Gentile believers in the Galatian churches would have had to work diligently, probably with the help of their Jewish spiritual siblings, to sort this out.
5. Though Hagar and Ishmael were mistreated, we must remember that when Abraham and Sarah mistreated them, God Himself took up their case and care.

**▲ The spiritual symbolism**

Galatians 4:21 Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says?

- ▶ ***The Hagar-Ishmael story represents Sinai***

Galatians 4:24 These things may be taken figuratively, for the women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.

- ▶ ***The Hagar-Ishmael story represents slavery***

Galatians 4:25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.

- ▶ ***The Hagar-Ishmael story represents scorn***

Galatians 4:29 At that time the son born in the ordinary way persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

- ▶ ***The Hagar-Ishmael story represents separation***

Galatians 4:30 But what does the Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."

- ▶ ***The Hagar-Ishmael story represents scarcity***

Galatians 4:30 for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."

Paul uses the story of Hagar and Ishmael as a metaphor in which he makes the following points:

1. The slave Hagar (the non-faith option) represents the old covenant, the covenant of the Law of Moses, a covenant which led to spiritual slavery;
2. The Jews who are under the yoke of the Law and refuse to be saved through faith in Christ are still in spiritual slavery;
3. Just as Ishmael mocked Isaac, so the Jews (in this case, the Judaizers), because of their confidence in the Law, persecute the Gentile believers;
4. Just as Sarah said, "Get rid of the slave woman and her son," so God has declared the old covenant to be abandoned and obsolete (Hebrews 8:13);
5. The inheritance, both then and now, belongs to those who are free—those who receive the promise of God (now the gospel) by faith.

***Isaac and his mother*****▲ A supernatural story**

Galatians 4:22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

Galatians 4:29 the son born by the power of the Spirit.

- ▶ ***Isaac was born supernaturally – by the promise of God***
- ▶ ***Isaac was born supernaturally – by the power of the Spirit***

1. The story of Isaac's miraculous birth as the result of God's often-repeated promise to give Abraham descendants is recorded in Genesis 12 through 21.
2. Abraham's faith in God's promise would become renowned and celebrated and is woven throughout the teachings of the New Testament.
3. Though the Hagar incident was a lapse in proper faith, Abraham would be strengthened in his faith upon God's reassurance and would refuse to waver.
  - ▼ Romans 4:20 He did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God.

**▲ The spiritual symbolism**

- ▶ ***The Sarah-Isaac story represents freedom***

Galatians 4:23 His son by the slave woman was born in the ordinary way; but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a promise.

Galatians 4:26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.

- ▶ ***The Sarah-Isaac story represents a full family***

Galatians 4:27 For it is written: "Be glad, O barren woman, who bears no children; break forth and cry aloud, you who have no labor pains; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband." (*From Isaiah 54:1*)

- ▶ ***The Sarah-Isaac story represents faith***

Galatians 4:28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

Galatians 4:31 Therefore, brothers, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

- ▶ ***The Sarah-Isaac story represents the family fortune***

Galatians 4:30 share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."

1. When you lose sight of God's promise and plan, you become desperate and begin to work your own fleshly plan—watch out, that leads to trouble.
2. Real spiritual freedom and an inestimable spiritual inheritance is available to you—not through the works of the law—but through faith in Christ.
3. Though you may not be the star in somebody else's story, God has a story designed especially for you in which He wants to work lovingly and powerfully.

# The Account of Hagar and Ishmael

## Genesis 16:1-16

<sup>16:1</sup> Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; <sup>2</sup> so she said to Abram, "The LORD has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Abram agreed to what Sarai said. <sup>3</sup> So after Abram had been living in Canaan ten years, Sarai his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. <sup>4</sup> He slept with Hagar, and she conceived. When she knew she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress. <sup>5</sup> Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering. I put my servant in your arms, and now that she knows she is pregnant, she despises me. May the LORD judge between you and me." <sup>6</sup> "Your servant is in your hands," Abram said. "Do with her whatever you think best." Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so she fled from her.

<sup>16:7</sup> The angel of the LORD found Hagar near a spring in the desert; it was the spring that is beside the road to Shur. <sup>8</sup> And he said, "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered. <sup>9</sup> Then the angel of the LORD told her, "Go back to your mistress and submit to her." <sup>10</sup> The angel added, "I will so increase your descendants that they will be too numerous to count." <sup>11</sup> The angel of the LORD also said to her: "You are now with child and you will have a son. You shall name him Ishmael, for the LORD has heard of your misery. <sup>12</sup> He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers."

<sup>16:13</sup> She gave this name to the LORD who spoke to her: "You are the God who sees me," for she said, "I have now seen the One who sees me." <sup>14</sup> That is why the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; it is still there, between Kadesh and Bered.

<sup>16:15</sup> So Hagar bore Abram a son, and Abram gave the name Ishmael to the son she had borne. <sup>16</sup> Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

## Genesis 21:1-21

<sup>21:1</sup> Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. <sup>2</sup> Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. <sup>3</sup> Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. <sup>4</sup> When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. <sup>5</sup> Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

<sup>21:6</sup> Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." <sup>7</sup> And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

<sup>21:8</sup> The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. <sup>9</sup> But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, <sup>10</sup> and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."

<sup>21:11</sup> The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. <sup>12</sup> But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. <sup>13</sup> I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring."

<sup>21:14</sup> Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba. <sup>15</sup> When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. <sup>16</sup> Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob. <sup>17</sup> God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. <sup>18</sup> Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." <sup>19</sup> Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

<sup>21:20</sup> God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. <sup>21</sup> While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

# New Testament Principles on Slavery

### 1) If you are a slave, serve with a godly attitude.

<sup>Ephesians 6:5</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. <sup>6</sup> Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. <sup>7</sup> Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, <sup>8</sup> because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. <sup>9</sup> And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.

<sup>Titus 2:9</sup> Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, <sup>10</sup> and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

<sup>1 Peter 2:18</sup> Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.

<sup>Colossians 3:22</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.

### 2) If you are a slave and you can gain your freedom, do so.

<sup>1 Corinthians 7:20</sup> Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. <sup>21</sup> Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. <sup>22</sup> For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. <sup>23</sup> You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

### 3) If you can help a slave gain his or her freedom, do so.

<sup>Philemon 10</sup> I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. <sup>11</sup> Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me. <sup>12</sup> I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. <sup>13</sup> I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. <sup>14</sup> But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced. <sup>15</sup> Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good— <sup>16</sup> no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

### 4) If you are not a slave, do not enter into slavery.

<sup>1 Corinthians 7:20</sup> Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. <sup>21</sup> Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. <sup>22</sup> For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave. <sup>23</sup> You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

### 5) The business of slavery is among the vilest sins.

<sup>1 Timothy 1:9</sup> We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, <sup>10</sup> for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine...

### 6) Christians live by higher standards, even when they find themselves in unjust circumstances like slavery.

<sup>Matthew 5:39</sup> But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

# General Biblical Principles about Mistreatment

- 1) If you're mistreated, take the high ground and respond to your persecutor with Christian respect and appropriate submission.
- 2) Live in such a way that any mistreatment you receive will be unjust persecution rather than punishment for wrongdoing.
- 3) Live to please God at all times in your attitudes and actions, and trust him in the midst of unjust suffering and mistreatment.
- 4) When you have the ability to remove yourself from underneath unjust suffering, seek the Lord's direction and follow it.
- 5) Whatever place in life in which you find yourself, you'd better never be the one who mistreats others—you'll stand before God.
- 6) The most noble kind of suffering is enduring mistreatment for the sake of Christ and his message and ministry.