**We Were Born of The Spirit**

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**Galatians 4:18-31**

**Wednesday Evening**

**August 24, 2022**

**Galatians 4:18-31**

18 But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you. 19 My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you, 20 I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.

21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,

24 which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar. 25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children-- 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

27 For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband." 28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.

29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

**18 But it is good to be zealous in a good thing always, and not only when I am present with you.**

Saints, Paul acknowledged that eagerness helps, especially when a leader cannot be with them but can depend on their faithfulness. But eagerness needs the right goal or object.

Paul worried that his Galatian friends were becoming eager over the lie that human moral and ethical efforts can satisfy God’s perfect standard.

The false teachers were eager to win over the Galatians in order that the Galatians would be eager to support them.

**19 My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,**

Saints, while the false teachers simply sought a larger following, Paul saw these believers as his dear children. Obviously his motives differed from those of the false teachers, for he loved the Galatians dearly, as a mother loves her children.

Paul compared the labor pains of childbirth to the pain he felt at their turning from the faith. Paul’s concern would continue until Christ would be fully developed in their lives. Paul wanted each of his children to reach spiritual maturity in the faith.

They would do so by having the likeness of Christ portrayed in their lives. “Fully developed in your lives” refers to a mother carrying an embryo until it is developed enough to be born.

Having Christ becoming fully developed in their lives emphasizes the personal changes necessary to become like Jesus.

**20 I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.**

Saints, as with any confusion or misunderstanding, face-to-face talk accomplishes more than written correspondence. Paul could not pick up and dash off to Galatia.

If he could go, he might change his tone but not his message or his expectations—those would always remain the same, for they were true and correct. Paul wrote this one-sided letter because he didn’t know what else to do.

**21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?**

Saints, under the influence of the false teachers (the Judaizers), the Galatians wanted to live under the law. Paul wanted to turn them back to accepting salvation by grace alone.

He confronted them directly by saying, “Do you know what the law really says?” The Galatian believers, most of them not from a Jewish background and thus with little more than an elementary understanding of the Jewish law, may have answered an indignant “yes.”

Hopefully they would have halted long enough to realize the impossible standards under which they were placing themselves.

**22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman.**

Saints, Paul turned to an argument from the Jewish Scripture and the life of Abraham, father of the Jewish nation, to illustrate his point.

The story, originally recorded in Genesis 16 and 21:1-21, was summarized by Paul as a fundamental spiritual lesson demonstrated by Abraham, his two sons, and his two wives.

In ancient times, a mother’s status affected the status of her children.

Paul reminded his readers that Abraham had two types of sons—one born of a slave-wife and one born of his freeborn wife. Paul wanted the Galatians to consider which type of descendant these Judaizers were more like and then decide which they themselves desired to be like.

**23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise,**

Saints, Besides the contrast in the status of the mothers, the two boys were different in another important way. Abraham’s son by the slave woman was born in a human attempt to bring about the fulfillment of God’s promise of descendants for Abraham.

Ishmael’s birth was engineered by Abraham and Sarah to “make the promise come true” by their own plans and efforts, rather than waiting on God’s timing.

However, Abraham’s son by the freeborn wife was born as God’s own fulfillment of his promise. When Abraham was ninety-nine years old and Sarah was ninety years old (Genesis 17:1, 17), God appeared to Abraham and promised Isaac’s birth (Genesis 17:15-16, 19).

**24 which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar**

Saints, By using this illustration, Paul was showing that what happened to Sarah and Hagar pictures the relationship between God and humankind.

Though perhaps difficult for us to follow, this was a common type of argument in Paul’s day. Paul was pointing to a great spiritual truth illustrated by this story, namely, the superiority of Christianity over Judaism.

The two women, Hagar and Sarah, represent God’s two covenants. The two well-known covenants were made with Abraham and with Moses. The one covenant with Moses had begun at Mount Sinai with the giving of the law (see Exodus 19:20).

Hagar was a slave-wife (Genesis 16:1); thus, her children would be slaves, for a child’s status equaled the status of his or her mother.

Although both sons had the same father, their mothers were different and their descendants became two different races—Ishmael, the Ishmaelites (Genesis 21:18; Psalms83:1-6); Isaac, the Jews (Genesis 22:16-18).

The Jews proudly considered themselves children of God’s covenant. However, Paul refuted the claim, reminding them of the “two covenants” and explaining that because of their behavior, the Jews were actually children of the covenant with Moses, the covenant of the law.

The Judaizers claimed superiority for their point of view by claiming that the blessings of the covenant came to descendants of Abraham through Isaac. Gentile Christians could be “adopted” into Abraham’s covenant group by accepting circumcision.

Paul contradicted the Judaizers by showing that those who promote the law for salvation or sanctification demonstrate the characteristics of slavery to the law. Paul claimed that they were products of the Sinai covenant, not Abraham’s covenant.

Trying to win salvation by obeying the law leads to slavery, and as the Jews persisted in this pattern, they showed themselves to be enslaved to their law.

Although the Jews had descended from Abraham and Isaac, as they tried to piously obey their laws, they were actually slaves to it. As slaves, they were more like Ishmael than Isaac.

**25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children-- 26 but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.**

Saints, not only do the women and their children represent two covenants (4:24), they also represent two Jerusalems. Hagar represents the old covenant given at Mount Sinai.

She also represents the present city of Jerusalem, which was enslaved to Rome and, as the center of the Jewish religious and legal system, was filled with people in slavery to the Jewish law.

Sarah, on the other hand, represents the heavenly Jerusalem, the promise of faith and freedom. Sarah was mother of the promised miracle-child, Isaac, and corresponds to the covenant of Abraham (inferred in 4:24).

This covenant promised a future “new covenant” that would begin at the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. Paul used the concept she is our mother to show that faith, not adherence to the law, is the source of our salvation.

Paul was offering the Galatians the opportunity to claim that they were descendants of Abraham through faith, and that they possessed citizenship in the spiritual Jerusalem. For Gentiles to be included in this way would be as miraculous as the birth of Isaac.

**27 For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children Than she who has a husband."**

Saints, Paul quoted from Isaiah’s prophecy (Isaiah 54:1). Isaiah’s words had comforted the Jewish exiles in Babylon. To be childless in ancient days meant great shame and disgrace for a woman.

Israel had been unfruitful, like a childless woman, but God would give great blessings and would change their mourning into rejoicing.

Paul applied the comparison of former-versus-later blessings, prophesied by Isaiah, to his Hagar/Sarah analogy. Sarah, who had been barren, was blessed with Isaac.

Her child was a gracious gift, not the result of work. Because God had promised to bless Abraham and his descendants, she ultimately would have more children than all the other women (the Christian church grew rapidly and is still growing).

While the Jews knew (or should have known) from their own Scriptures that Gentiles would turn to God, two changes astounded them:

(1) The Gentiles did not have to become Jews first; and (2) so many Gentiles would become believers that they would outnumber Jewish believers.

**28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.**

Saints, the Galatians who had become Christians under Paul’s ministry, fit into the analogy as children of the promise, just like Isaac.

Just as Isaac’s birth was a miracle of God, so Christianity, offering people the opportunity to be born again, is a miracle of God (John 3:3).

Just as Isaac’s mother was free, so Isaac was free, and so Christianity offers true freedom because it depends not on our actions but on God’s unchangeable promises to us.

Paul hammered home his point to the Galatian believers: “As children of the promise, you never need to be enslaved to the Jewish laws. You are like Isaac!”

**29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.**

Saints, Paul reminded his readers of the story in Genesis 21. Abraham had held a feast on the day Isaac was weaned. Isaac was probably about two years old; thus, Ishmael would have been a teenager.

Ishmael had teased his younger half brother—Paul called this persecution. Paul explained that the persecution of the older brother on the younger was continuing to play itself out in the later animosity between the nations.

Those nations had descended from them (Israel and Edom, Psalms83:1-6), and on into the persecution of those who want people to keep the law (the Jews) toward those who are born of the Holy Spirit and thus are freed from the law.

**30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman."**

Saints, Scripture says in Genesis 21:9-10, Sarah saw this happen, went to Abraham, and demanded that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away.

The second question refers to the application: So what happens to Ishmael (the Jews) and Isaac (Christians) today? Judaism and Christianity could not coexist as paths to the same goal any more than Ishmael and Isaac could share Abraham’s inheritance.

Perhaps most ironic was Paul’s bold clarification of this old story. The Jews had long held that this verse described God’s rejection of the Gentiles. But Paul turned the tables: “You had it wrong. Jews and Gentiles are included together in God’s inheritance when they become believers, or ’Isaacs.’

Those who reject grace lose their share in the inheritance, whether unbelieving Jews or unrepentant Gentiles. Those are the ’Ishmaels.’“ Those in slavery to the law will not share the family inheritance with those who have experienced freedom in Christ and salvation by faith alone.

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

Saints, Paul tied up his allegory, and indeed all the points he proved with it, with the simple word, so. He repeated that we (that is, all believers of all time) are children of the free woman, acceptable to God because of our faith. That freedom must be treasured because of the price paid for it.

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**