

ABRAHAM'S TWO SONS
Gal. 4:21-31

Intro: In the epistle to the churches of Galatia Paul has been defending the doctrine that salvation is by grace through faith--not by obedience to the Law.

Paul has explained this from every possible answer. The more you read Galatians, the more complete it appears to be.

He started by showing that the coming of Jesus Christ into the world was proof that man could not save Himself. AND HE COMES BACK TO THIS AGAIN AND AGAIN IN THE EPISTLE.

Then he shows how supernaturally he was given the Gospel--that he had not had the slightest opportunity for consultation with the other apostles until years after the Gospel had been given to him. And when he did confer with them, they did not offer one single change in the doctrine of salvation he had been preaching.

Paul has also shown us that the Law was never given for salvation--that it was given to prove that all men are sinners, and it was given as a schoolmaster for Israel until Christ should come!

Paul has introduced the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

He has gone back into the Old Testament Scriptures to prove that salvation has always been by grace through faith.

He has argued from the standpoint that God cannot nullify His promise to Abraham by introducing additional features when He gave the Law to Moses--that this would in effect mean no salvation at all.

In our message last Sunday we saw how tragically legalism had affected Paul's fellowship with the Galatian believers--and their fellowship with each other.

And so Paul has taught, has illustrated, has debated, has exhorted, has plead, and has illustrated.

In our text before us this morning we come again to another illustration.

It concerns ABRAHAM'S TWO SONS.

Paul goes back to Abraham because the legalists were always going back to him. SUDDENLY PAUL SEEKS TO STOP THEM IN THEIR TRACKS BY SAYING, "DON'T YOU REALIZE THAT ABRAHAM HAD TWO SONS?"

IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BE RELATED TO ABRAHAM; YOU MUST BE RELATED TO HIM THROUGH THE RIGHT SON.

In v. 21 his question clearly implies that the person who teaches salvation by the Law, or the one who believes it, has never really understood the Law.

And so, in an attempt to reach others who still doubt his teaching, he is going back to the OT again--this time for an illustration.

Note how this gives us some guidance on the use of the Old Testament in explaining the New. By "allegory" (v. 24) Paul did not mean that the story of Abraham and Sarah and Hagar never really took place, but he means that their is spiritual truth bound up in this historical event--there are applications and illustrations which we can find back in that time.

Summarizing this whole passage, Dr. DeHaan says in his book on Galatians that we have five combinations of two in this passage:

1. Two women--Hagar and Sarah.
2. Two sons--Ishmael and Isaac.
3. Two covenants--law and grace.
4. Two mountains--Sinai and Calvary.
5. Two cities--earthly Jerusalem and heavenly Jerusalem" (p. 147).

(Read and explain vv. 22-26, showing also that "Agar" is Hagar.)

The historical account is found in Gen. 16 and 21.

First of all, let us note

I. THE CONTRASTS (vv. 22, 23).

There are two:

- A. Hagar was "a bondmaid"; Sarah was "a freewoman."
- B. Ishmael was born "in the common course of nature" (Lightfoot, p. 179)--as children are usually born; Isaac was a miracle--born in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

It is important to understand these two points in order to understand what Paul is driving at. This lead to

II. THE CORRELATION of the past with the present (in Paul's day). Cf. vv. 24-26.

Hagar represents Sinai and the bondage which was to be seen everywhere when you looked at Jerusalem. Spiritually it

was in bondage. There was no freedom, no joy, no assurance. The people of Jerusalem was people trying to pay a debt and conscious that they were falling farther behind all of the time.

In v. 26 Paul directs their thoughts to the heavenly "Jerusalem." Cf. Rev. 21; Heb. 11:10, 14; and especially Heb. 12:18-22.

Only in Christ can men be free, i.e., "one who is not a slave . . . not bound by an obligation" (Thayer, p. 204).

Therefore, the Jews of Paul's day were manifesting that they were related to Hagar, not Sarah.

But this leads to a third point.

III. THE CONFLICT (vv. 28, 29).

V. 29 certainly refers to Gen. 21:9, 10, but Gen. 16:4 can also be included.

Those who enslave are always the aggressors.

Think of the opposition that the Lord Jesus had. It is inconceivable that men would oppose the doctrine of salvation by grace in preference of salvation by works--BUT THEY WILL!

Cf. Gal. 4:16.

Remember what the Lord said to the scribes and Pharisees in Matt. 23:15, Woe unto you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."

If you preach and believe the Gospel of the grace of God, YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE OPPOSITION. Men reject a Gospel which condemns them as helpless and hopeless.

But I must go on to my final point.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES. What is the outcome from the standpoint of our OT illustration?

There are two again.

A. First the joy and fruitfulness of the Gospel (v. 27).
(quoted from Isa. 54:1)

Again let it be said that there is no joy in legalism,

nor is there any comparison to the fruitfulness of the two doctrines.

Note this word of encouragement about the Gospel. We often need it. DOES THIS VERSE MEAN THAT THERE ARE GOING TO BE FAR MORE REACHED THROUGH THE PURE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD THAN THROUGH THE MANY PERVERSIONS OF THE GOSPEL? It seems to!

Never corrupt the Gospel for the sake of the results you are trying to get. There is no message on the face of the earth as fruitful as the Gospel itself.

Note the second consequence.

B. The final outcome (vv. 30, 31; quoted from Gen. 21:10).

What a tragedy awaits those who think that they are saved by works, by the Law, by human merit!

Here it is in the Word of God.

Cf. Matt. 7:21-23.

Concl: Where do you stand this morning? Do you believe that you can earn your own way to heaven? My friend, from the teaching of the Word of God you do not have a leg to stand on. It cannot be done. It has never been done.

There is only one way to heaven--by believing the promise which God gave to Abraham--the promise of Christ. He alone can set us free, can take away our sins, can make us children of God. If you will receive Him, you can have eternal life this morning. If you do not receive Him as your Saviour, you will never have life--regardless of how religious you might be.

Ill. Questioning children for baptism about how they would tell someone else the way to become a Christ. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." Why? Because He died for our sins. And what else? And rose again. RIGHT!

May no one ever move us away from the Gospel! Christ is the only Saviour of men.