



Week 10: Galatians 4:21-31

### GOSPEL SONSHIP

This section of Galatians might seem complex to modern readers, but for the Galatian believers steeped in the Old Testament, Paul's analogy of two covenants, two sons, and two wives of Abraham would have been clear. His ultimate message? The Old Testament Law served a purpose, but it wasn't meant to be permanent. True freedom from slavery and true sonship, he argues, comes only through the promise of Christ.

### THE SCRIPTURE: GALATIANS 4:21-31

<sup>21</sup> 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<sup>a</sup>, 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>b</sup>. <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.

---

<sup>1</sup> Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. <sup>a</sup> **flesh** - Both Ishmael and Isaac were Abraham's sons, but their births differed significantly. Ishmael was conceived naturally, without divine intervention (Genesis 16:4). The term 'flesh' refers to human nature apart from divine influence. <sup>b</sup> **Hagar** - Sarah's Egyptian handmaid and mother of Abraham's firstborn son, Ishmael. For more on Hagar, read Genesis 21. Hagar likely came into the service of Sarah and Abraham during their first sojourn in Egypt in Genesis 12. <sup>c</sup> Isaiah 54:1. <sup>d</sup> Genesis 21:10-12.

## LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS: WEEK 10

### OPENING QUESTIONS

1. What does true freedom look like to you? Is it the absence of limitations, the ability to make choices without consequence, or something else entirely?
2. Have you ever experienced a significant change in your life that completely transformed who you were? How did it feel to step into this new version of yourself?

### DIVING DEEPER

3. Recall the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 15:1-6, and how Abraham initially respond to it. How did his approach change in Genesis 16:1-2?
4. This week's passage revisits the Old Testament story found in Genesis 21:1-21. Why was Hagar forced to leave Abraham? How does God demonstrate his kindness and compassion towards Hagar in this difficult situation?
5. Genesis records Abraham's attempt to fulfill God's promise through his own means. Have you ever tried to achieve something on your own, without relying on God? What were the results?
6. Using Galatians 4:22-26, complete this chart contrasting Ishmael and Isaac. Consider factors like birth, mother, status, and the spiritual implications of each.

ISHMAEL

ISAAC

ISHMAEL	ISAAC

7. In what ways are the Galatians and also we, as believers, similar to Isaac as children of promise?
8. Given that Ishmael was 17 and Isaac was 3 when Hagar left, what might have been the source of conflict between the two brothers (Galatians 4:29)?
9. Consider this comment by John Stott:

"The persecution of the true church...is not always by the world, who are strangers...but by our half-brothers, religious people, the nominal church. It has always been so. The Lord Jesus was bitterly opposed, rejected, mocked and condemned by His own nation...the greatest enemies of the evangelical faith today are not unbelievers... but the church, the establishment, the hierarchy. Isaac is always mocked and persecuted by Ishmael."

Why do you think overly religious people are so threatened by the gospel?

10. In what sense does the gospel bring freedom from slavery? What does it mean to live as a child in a relationship not enslaved to religion?
11. Are there any personal rules or expectations you impose on others? If so, why do you think you do this?

---

<sup>u</sup> John Stott, *The Message of Galatians, Revised*. *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2021), 127.