

**Galatians 4:19** my little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you! **20** I wish I could be present with you now and change my tone, for I am perplexed about you. **21** Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? **22** For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. **23** But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. **24** Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. **25** Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. **26** But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. **27** 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.” **28** Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. **29** 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. **30** 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.” **31** So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

## Review of argument of Galatians this far:

### 1:1-5 intro (outline)

#### A. Paul’s Gospel is the authoritative Gospel

1:6-10 you are deserting Christ for a different gospel (not good news!)

1:11-24 my gospel of independent divine origin

2:1-10 my gospel and calling recognized by other Apostles

2:11-14 I confronted Peter over inconsistency of conduct with gospel

#### B. God’s blessings come to believers not law-keepers

2:15-16 even Jews believe in Christ to be justified –because law justifies no-one

objection – 2:17-21 Christ encourages transgression – no, justification is not what the law was for

3:1-5 You received the Spirit by faith not works – you will also be sanctified by the spirit – not by law keeping

example 3:6-9 Abraham as a believer counted righteous

3:10-14 law brings a curse because it requires perfect obedience –Christ rescued us from the curse by substituting himself for us

3:15-18 God made a promise 430 years before he gave the law – it can’t void the promise!

objection – 3:19-29 why was the law given at all? Given to imprison everything under sin until the promise was kept in Christ

4:1-11 Jews and Gentiles were slaves to the spirit of legalism – God rescued you – don’t go back!

4:12-16 you felt blessed when I first brought you the good news

4:17-20 Judaizers want to exclude you to make themselves look good

## Be Hearers of the Word

**21** Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? **22** For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. **23** But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

Paul takes his readers again to the text of scripture – to the Torah – and he says ‘it is written’ γεγραπται; this word occurs in this form 67 times in the NT. It is in the perfect tense, which refers to a past act that has results that continue to the present. The Weymouth New Testament translates ‘it stands written’. The scriptures were used as the final authority to establish all matters of doctrine and practice. Jesus himself appealed to the written word in his temptation in the wilderness. The very first thing Satan did in the garden when he tempted Eve to disobey was to undermine God’s word; ‘**Did God actually say?**’ [Gen.3:1]. Paul here attributes the Galatians susceptibility to error to their lack of commitment to the text of scripture. Sure it sounds noble that you want to obey God’s law. It sounds respectable that you want to be righteous and keep the law. But Paul says if that’s what you’re going to do, then you obviously haven’t been listening to the law – you haven’t been reading your bible!

## The History

He says 'lets get out the flannel-graph and go over this bible story again – remember – Abraham had two sons? And his two sons had different mothers – one was a slave and one was free. And the way they were conceived was different too – the son of the slave was born 'according to the flesh'. If you remember the story from Genesis, Abraham is a 75 year old guy, and God shows up and tells Abraham to leave everything he knows and go and he will make of him a great nation (i.e. lots of kids – and when he says lots, he's talking in terms of the dust and the stars). But Abraham isn't seeing it happen and he says to God 'all the stuff you're promising me sounds great, but I've got no kids, and a slave in my house will end up inheriting everything.' God answers 'no but your very own son will be your heir'. Then, 11 years after the original promise, we get to chapter 16. Abraham is now 86, and he and Sarah still have no kids. Listen:

**Genesis 16:1** Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. She had a female Egyptian servant whose name was Hagar. **2** And Sarai said to Abram, "Behold now, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Go in to my servant; it may be that I shall obtain children by her." And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. **3** So, after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her servant, and gave her to Abram her husband as a wife.

**4** And he went in to Hagar,

STOP! Guys, let me talk to you for a minute. Women are smart – smarter than us most of the time. That can be dangerous. If your wife asks you if you think so-and-so is attractive, be careful how you answer – be very careful. I'm not sure there is a right answer. If you say 'no', she knows you're lying. If you say 'no, I don't like her nose' then she thinks you've really been sizing her up. If you say 'yes' you'll be very lonely for at least a month. Abraham and Sarah were married before he left Ur. (I wasn't stuttering – that's the name of the place they used to live). And that was 11 years ago, so if they got married when he was 75, then they'd been married 11 years. I think it's fair to guess that they'd been married a bit longer than that. Now Sarah says to Abraham – 'notice my young tall dark mysterious Egyptian handmaid – maybe you should sleep with her – I think God would want you to; after all, he's not letting me have any kids, and we've got to do something to get this 'count the dust number the stars' thing going.' So Abraham says 'that sounds good'. STOP! I think that was a test! Abraham, you were supposed to look deep into your wife's eyes, and say 'Sarah, I would gladly live the rest of my days bearing the shame and reproach of being childless rather than betraying the trust of my one true love, the delight of my eyes, the wife of my youth, even for a moment!' He had an opportunity to be bold in faith; to lead like a godly man – and he blew it...

**Genesis 16:4** And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress. **5** And Sarai said to Abram, "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!"

I think we have to be careful how we read a text of scripture like this one. We can read in a first grade monotone and totally miss the reality that is conveyed in the words. When we read a passage like this, we need to see Abraham coming into the tent and seeing his wife Sarah curled up in the fetal position on their sleeping mat, mascara all over her eyes, hair a mess, and like most clueless guys asks 'what's wrong honey?', to which she explodes with fangs and nails and says "May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my servant to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the LORD judge between you and me!" We need to realize this was a real life story with real normal people with feelings and emotions.

Whatever happened here, it was flesh – it was natural – it was entirely human. The son of the slave woman was conceived in the normal natural way. A man and a woman come together and a baby is conceived. You put two fertile people together and you get offspring. If one is infertile you fix the problem – you swap the infertile one out for a fertile one and you get offspring – according to the flesh. There should be nothing surprising about that. Aren't they teaching that in home economics?  $1 + 1 = 3$  or  $5$  or  $6$  or  $7$ ...

Now this understandably created some serious tension in the home. And it lasted for 13 years. Abraham is now 99; Sarah is 90, Ishmael is 13, and God shows up again and says that the promise thing is still on, but it's going to be through Sarah your wife. Sarah laughed. She knew that she was no longer ovulating. Her body had stopped producing eggs. We don't know how advanced their understanding of the human reproductive system was, but they both knew that at this stage in life, getting pregnant was impossible!

And that's what God wanted them to realize. So that a year later when they looked back and named the child 'laughter' this hundred year old couple would have no doubt that God had done something supernatural. He had entered history and defied the laws of nature to accomplish his plan. It says: **the son of the free woman was born through promise.**

This child was not born by natural means. No human effort could have produced these results – even in our scientifically advanced society. The son of the free woman was born by an act of God in keeping his promise. Abraham had two sons – one was the product of human ingenuity and effort; one was the fruit of the ridiculous impossible promise of God. Those are the facts of the story

### **The Allegory:**

Now Paul moves to look at this history as a picture meant to teach us something.  
**24 Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.**

Paul equates the two mothers as two covenants – two contracts or binding agreements. The Judaizers had their own understanding of this allegory; On the one side there is Hagar – Mount Sinai in Arabia – producing slaves – gentiles. The other (implied not stated) is Sarah – Mount Moriah in Jerusalem – producing heirs – Jews (and you must become a Jew to inherit the blessings – gentiles are shut out)

Paul takes this analogy and turns it on its head. He says that Jerusalem of his day corresponds to Hagar bearing children under the laws of Mount Sinai into Jewish slavery. Paul says we (Jew and Gentile) believers are born from above by the Spirit of God – a completely supernatural event.

**Hebrews 12:18 For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest 19 and the sound of a trumpet and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that no further messages be spoken to them. 20 For they could not endure the order that was given, "If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned." 21 Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, "I tremble with fear." 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, 23 and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, 24 and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. You are under a contract – you are either under the law and its demands of perfect performance or you are free-born –**

**birthed as a direct act of God in fulfillment of His promise – where He does all the work and we freely receive.**

### **The Prophecy: Isaiah 54:1**

**27 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.”**

Paul again cries ‘it is written’ and grounds his argument in authoritative scripture. After describing the ultimate sin-bearer in Isaiah chapter 53, God commands those who have every reason to mourn to rejoice. He declares that those who are barren will have more children than those with a husband. We could paraphrase this ‘delight yourself in God because he will do for you what is absolutely impossible! He will go way beyond what you could ever imagine! God will act on your behalf like only God can act so that all will see that it is God and not human effort that gets the glory’

### **Persecution:**

**28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 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. 30 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.” 31 So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.**

Paul adds a note of practical realism for his readers, and he takes it right out of the account in Genesis. He says that his straying Galatian readers are indeed brothers; spiritual descendants of Isaac; children born out of the word of God. But don’t expect that life won’t be a hard place. Back in Genesis, Ishmael persecuted Isaac. And he finds a principle here. Those who are of the flesh and live their lives by the principle of law will always try to make it difficult for those who simply trust God’s audacious promises and rest in them. They want to impose their laws on you and stifle your joy.

Again he calls their attention to the written word – because it is life-giving. But what does the scripture say?

**Genesis 21:10 So she said to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.”**

There is no place in the inheritance for the son of the slave woman. The woman Hagar, the law from mount Sinai, the legalistic Judaism of Jerusalem as a means of performance based standing with God is to be thrown out. It has no place in the inheritance. So brothers, we – we Jews who have turned from the law as a means of earning righteousness to Christ our Hope and Righteousness, we Gentiles that have turned from our pagan idolatry to find new life freely given in Jesus Christ, we together as brothers and sisters are children of the free woman. We have been born of God and we have been given an inheritance that is incorruptible!