

EXPERIENCING GOD'S GRACE

PART 7: TWO WOMEN, TWO COVENANTS

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Paul uses Hagar and Sarah figuratively to show the differences between legalism (law-works) and grace (freely given). He is showing the superiority of grace over works because the Galatians were fooled by Judaizers who told them that one must keep the law in order to be righteous.

The Galatian Christians were being deceived into thinking they needed to follow the law of Moses, as well as believe in Christ, in order to be saved (Galatians 2:4). Calling on the story of Abraham, Paul refutes this idea by creating an allegory of four pairs:

I. GALATIANS 4:19-31

A. Paul's Deep Concern for the Galatian Christians (4:19-20)

My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰ how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

B. The Analogy of Hagar and Sarah (4:21-31)

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 according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise. ²⁴ These things are being taken figuratively: 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, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who

were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband." ²⁸ Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

³⁰ But what does 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 and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

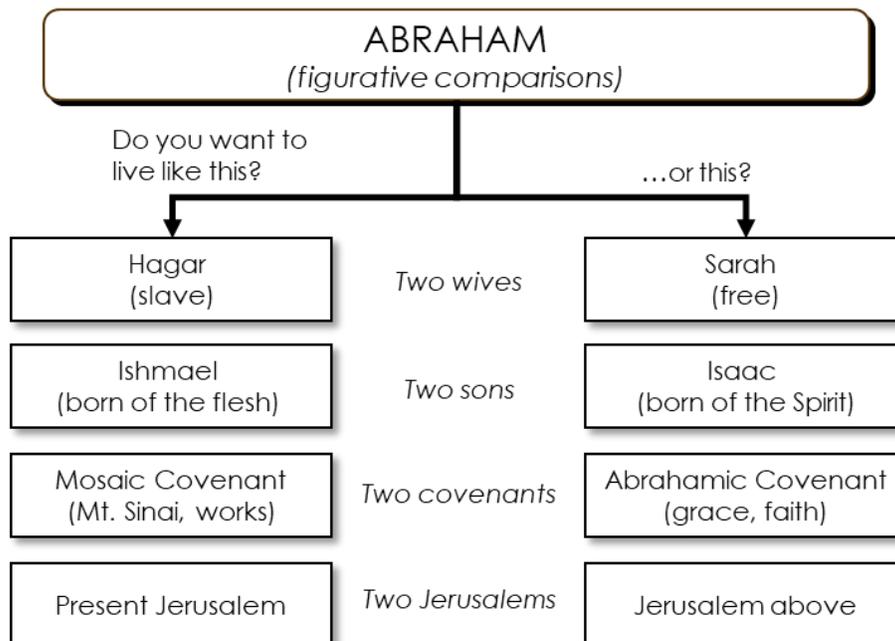
II. COMMENTS

(4:19) The phrase "until Christ is formed in you" is in contrast to the evil motives of the Judaizers. Paul is trying to bring the collations to Christlikeness which is the goal of salvation.

(4:21-31) Paul continues to contrast grace and law faith and works by employing an Old Testament story as an analogy or illustration of what he has been teaching.

(4:23) The phrase according to the flesh is describing Ishmael's birth which was motivated by Abraham and Sarah's lack of faith in God's promise and fulfilled by sinful human needs.

(4:24) Paul uses two mothers their two sons and two locations as a further illustration of two covenants as illustrated below.



The following table also describes the differences between Hagar/Ishmael and Sarah/Isaac. Notice how Hagar and Ishmael figuratively represent legalism and Sarah and Isaac figuratively represent God's grace.

HAGAR/ISHMAEL	SARAH/ISAAC
Slaves (to the law)	Free (from the law; grace)
Ishmael was born from human impulses	Isaac was born from God's promise
Mount Sinai/earthly Jerusalem, (covenant of law)	The heavenly Jerusalem (covenant of promise)
No one could keep all the laws, so a perfect sacrifice was needed	Christ became the perfect sacrifice-salvation is offered by grace through faith in Christ
Cast out/no inheritance ¹ (salvation/eternal life)	Receives the inheritance (salvation/eternal life)
Represents those trying to gain righteousness through law-works	Represents those who gain righteousness through faith in Christ

III. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways did Hagar and Ishmael represent legalism and Sarah and Isaac represent God's grace?

2. What reasons does Paul give in this passage for living under God's grace, rather than living under the law?

¹ Inheritance; (Gr. κληρονομία, klēronomeō) as receiving God's salvation, gifts, and benefits. (BibleWorks, LLC, Version 10).

3. Scripture tells us that believers are to do “good works” but isn't that getting into legalism?

4. In what ways did Paul want the Galatians to become like him? (see 4:12-20)

5. What was the contrast between what Paul and his companions wanted for the Galatians and what the false teachers wanted?

6. Why do you think Paul refused to give up on the Galatian believers?

7. Leader's questions (optional).

IV. APPLICATION

As you praise God for your freedom in Christ, ask him for wisdom to see any pitfalls. Pray for his protection in your spirit and in your relationships