

16. The analogy of 2 women, 2 sons, & 2 covenants Gal 4:21-31

vs 21-23

Using the Old Testament, Paul shows that the systems of grace and law can't exist together as principles in our lives.

Paul reminded his readers that Abraham had two sons (those born later are not important to his illustration), and that they should consider which of the two they were most like.

Two contrasts are pointed out:

- A. One son, Isaac, was born of Sarah, the free woman; the other, Ishmael, was born of Hagar, who was a slave. According to ancient law and custom the status of a mother affected the status of her son.

- B. A second contrast was the way the sons were conceived. Ishmael was born in the ordinary way, that is, in the course of nature and requiring no miracle and no promise of God. Isaac, on the other hand, was born as the result of a promise. Abraham and Sarah were beyond the age of childbearing, but God miraculously fulfilled His promise in bringing life out of the deadness of Sarah's womb (cf. Rom 4:18-21).

Vs 24-27

To emphasize the contrast between Law and grace Paul explains the two mothers figuratively. He was not in any sense denying the literal meaning of the story of Abraham, but he declared that that story, especially the matters relating to the conception of the two sons, had an additional meaning, explaining the conflict law & grace, and between Judaism and those who trusted Christ for salvation.

The apostle pointed to two covenants. The Mosaic, had its origin at Mount Sinai. Those under this legal covenant were slaves. As Hagar brought forth a slave, so does the Law. The implication is that Sarah represents the Abrahamic Covenant which is based on grace, and that she brought forth children who are free.

Paul pointed to two Jerusalems. Hagar also stood for the first-century city of Jerusalem, a city enslaved to Rome and in slavery to the Law. Sarah, on the other hand is the mother of all the children of grace, and corresponded to the "Jerusalem above." (This heavenly city, which one day will come to earth (Rev 21:2), and is now the "city of the living God" (cf. Heb 12:22).

4:27 "This quotation from Isa 54:1 is a prediction that the children of the heavenly city will be more numerous than those of earthly Jerusalem. Sarah was the woman who for so long was barren. Hagar was the woman who has a husband. In what way are we to understand the eventual triumph of Sarah, or the heavenly Jerusalem? The answer is that the children of promise include all those, Gentiles as well as Jews, who come to God by faith—many more than the children of Hagar who abide under the law." (Believers Bible Commentary)

4:28-31

vs 28 as Isaac's existence was made possible by God's promise, so the way of salvation by faith is made possible through God's promises in Christ.

Vs 29 Paul compared Ishmael's persecution of Isaac to the Jews persecution of Christians.

Vs 30 When Sarah observed Ishmael mocking Isaac, she asked Abraham to expel the slave woman and her son lest Ishmael become a joint heir with Isaac. And God granted Sarah's request (cf. Gen 21:10, 12).

Paul uses this to again state that law and grace cannot be mixed - they are incompatible; human merit cannot be mixed into the Gospel. Any notions of earning favor with God must be decisively cast out/ rejected! Anyone who preaches such a message will be "accursed"! (*Excommunicated from the believers and condemned by God.*)

Vs 31 In conclusion, Paul affirmed that true believers are not children of the slave woman who was driven away and was denied a share in the inheritance. Rather all believers are children of the free woman, "heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Rom 8:17).

We are children of Abraham by faith (Gal 3:7)