

Galatians 4:21-31 – The Gospel in Story Form

TSK, GreekLexicon, Handfuls, Geneva, Trapp, Robertson, Poole, Rienecker, Gaebelein, Family, Calvin, Henry, Bezuyen, Barnes?
Brothers and sisters in the Lord: Apostle Paul used different ways to show the Galatians they were foolish for **ignoring the doctrine of *salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone***.

One way in which he did this was to use an illustration from the life of Hagar and Sarah – two women mentioned in Genesis. This illustration wasn't used in its original intended purpose, **but just as a historical narrative that everyone knew.** He used it as an allegory. It clearly helped to make his point as you will see today.

Our headings are:

Hagar and Sarah illustrated the nature of the Covenant of Works and Grace
Hagar and Sarah illustrate the result of the Covenant of Works and Grace

Our goals are: **That you will hold on for dear life to the Covenant of Grace, the one which Jesus kept for you, so you can receive its full benefits, and that you will confront those who are trying to help save themselves by their own effort.**

Hagar and Sarah illustrated the nature of the Covenant of Works and Grace

21 **Tell me**, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the **one by a bondwoman**, the other **by a freewoman**. 23 But he who was of the bondwoman was **born according to the flesh**, and he of the freewoman **through promise**,

1. Abraham had 2 sons: Ishmael was born of Hagar, a servant, and Isaac was born of Sarah, a free woman.

a. Ishmael was born according to man's desires as Abraham tried to "help God out," by having a child with a servant, but God rejected that child.

b. Isaac was born according to God's promise—a remarkable promise—to old and almost dead Abraham and barren Sarah.

Sarah was 90 years old at the time, yet she conceived by a miracle...a work of God.

24 which things are **symbolic**. For these are the **two covenants**: the one from **Mount Sinai** which gives **birth to bondage**, which is Hagar —
25 for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to **Jerusalem** which now is, and is in bondage with her children — 26 **but the Jerusalem above is free**, which is the mother of us all.

2. There are 2 allegories (symbolisms) here:

Allegory 1: Hagar, who joined with Abraham and had an **illegitimate son** by **human effort**, was a **picture of the law** that was given at Mt. Sinai.

Allegory 2: Sarah who joined with Abraham and had a legitimate son, by **heavenly work** from a **heavenly promise**...was a **picture of grace**.

3. What is the meaning of these allegories:

Human effort (Hagar, the law at Mt. Sinai, earthly Jerusalem) was not sufficient to keep the law. Human effort kept people in bondage. It represented working for salvation...like the Judaizers of Galatia. **None could be saved by keeping the law.**

That which came from heaven (Sarah, the cross, the heavenly Jerusalem) was true and good and hopeful. Sarah received the promise – knowing she was unable to have children by herself. **She got it for free**...like all believers today receive salvation and the hope of heaven.

No wonder Apostle Paul was asking: “Tell me, do the fruitless “work’s salvation” make sense?”

4. Lessons:

a. Sometimes using an illustration can clarify the words you are proclaiming. Use good illustration, especially with your children. Allegories and stories help to make things more understandable. This is why **there are so many parables in the Bible.**

b. Man today continues to try to earn his salvation, either because he is deceived or because he wants to stoke his own ego (he wants to feel in charge), but he will perpetually frustrate himself. No one is saved by any human effort. **Those who try to do this insult God and his Son!**

c. Others are contented to be enslaved to sin because they don’t know they are enslaved. The Devil has blinded their eyes. It is for you to **show them.** That’s what **good Christian love** would do.

d. Those who hold to Judaism (most Jews today) are lost! They will go to hell. They may not be as bad as other people, but they will go to hell because they don’t know or believe in the Covenant Keeper.

Hagar and Sarah illustrated the results of the Covenant of Works and Grace

27 For it is written: "**Rejoice, O barren**, You who do not bear! Break forth and shout, You who are not in labor! **For the desolate has many more children** Than she who has a husband." 28 Now we, brethren, **as Isaac was, are children of promise.**

1. Sarah, the one who was barren and unable by her own strength to have children, was blessed with becoming the mother of many nations through her seed, Isaac.

2. What joy this gave to the woman who was once desolate and was mocked by the people of the world.

She was able to break out into singing...for the dead became alive...the barren bore.

She was able to shout out this good news.

Isaiah 54:1 "Sing, O barren, You who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, You who have not labored with child! **For more are the children of the desolate Than the children of the married woman,**" says the LORD. 2 "**Enlarge the place of your tent,** And let them stretch out the curtains of your dwellings; Do not spare; Lengthen your cords, And strengthen your stakes.

Apostle Paul used this historical passage as an allegory, taking a story from the Bible and using it to teach. He just used it to teach about the joy that comes when God draws sinners to himself.

3. Apostle Paul's point was Christians are the children of the promise as Isaac was, and those children came to being by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Sarah was a picture of the New Jerusalem, the new kingdom of God. **No wonder they sang aloud!**

Christians, Jews or Gentiles, were the children of promise. The Covenant Keeper worked on their behalf.

Genesis 21:12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for **in Isaac your seed shall be called.**

Romans 9:7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, **In Isaac your seed shall be called.**"

Those who were trying to earn their salvation were as hopeless and unproductive as Ishmael.

29 But, **as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit**, even so it is now. 30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman." 31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

4. Based on the fact that Christians (Jews and Gentiles) were children of promise, they were and would be hated and persecuted by the children of the law. Consider what Ishmael did to Jacob.

Genesis 21:9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, **whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing.**

He mocked the one through whom salvation would come. This was worse than stabbing Isaac with a sword.

Consider what the Jews (those who were like Hagar and her son) did to Christians.

1 Thessalonians 2:15 who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and **have persecuted us**; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men...

The Jews **killed the prophets**. The Jews **killed Jesus**. The Jews **worked to kill** the apostles and believers.

5. So the bondwoman had to be thrown out and her child with her and they would get no inheritance.

The point: There is no salvation for those who try to save themselves by their own good works.

Genesis 17:20 "And as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. 21 **"But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this set time next year."**

This is quite strong language, but Apostle Paul wanted Christians in Galatia to **reject the false teachings of the Judaizers and literally cast them out** from among them.

6. Lessons:

a. Many people will look down on you who believe you can't contribute anything for your salvation. Let them laugh. That's the only joy they will get. Those who try to get salvation by their own good works will be disappointed. They will become depressed when they consider the seriousness of their sins and know in their hearts they can't solve their problems. **Let the Hindus and the Muslims laugh. Let the Arminian laugh! God is laughing at them for rejecting his Covenant Keeper.**
(Psalm 2)

b. Our Muslim neighbors are deceived into thinking Ishmael is the chosen one of God and that salvation ultimately came through him. So tell them so they don't go to hell looking for salvation where it is not found! Salvation is in Jesus alone, the son of Isaac. (Beware of sweet preachers!)

c. The fact that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, does not remove the need to faithfully teach your children. This is what Marcus and his brother and sister need to learn. His baptism is a promise of the accomplished work of Jesus for him. Let him receive that promise through faith.

d. It is not uncommon for Christians to be persecuted in subtle and not-so-subtle ways. The world will mock how you raise your children, how you live as a family, and particularly, what you believe. **But this persecution will not last forever.**

e. Is your mouth filled with praise because of the Lord's work? Don't you feel like this? I hope so.

Isaiah 49:13- Sing, O heavens! Be joyful, O earth! And break out in singing, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people, and will have mercy on His afflicted.

Conclusion:

The covenant of works (pictured by Hagar) – which was the keeping of law – could not save because none could keep the it. Those who hold to it are heading to a disastrous future in hell.

God therefore provided the covenant of grace (pictured by Sarah) in which Jesus kept the law and took the punishment for covenant keepers. Those who hold on to its promises are guaranteed peace now and security in heaven forever.

Brothers in the Lord:

1. Rejoice you don't have to do anything to save yourself – especially considering that you couldn't.

2. Restrain yourself from being frustrated when you sin. Confess your sins through your Covenant Keeper. Don't kick yourself for allowing sin to overwhelm and you stop serving the Lord. If you do this, you are trying to earn your salvation and robbing Christ of his glory. Worrying makes you into a god. God hates that.

3. Repeat this story of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone so the world can hear it. The world needs this message. Don't hoard the food of life while people are starving.

Finally: You need to be saved but you can't save yourself. Your only hope is to plead with God to accept what your Covenant Keeper, the Lord Jesus, did for you in his life of obedience and in his suffering and death at the end of his life for you. Do this today.