

## Who's your Mother.

Jeremiah 31:27-34

Hebrews 8

Galatians 4:21-31

Last week's message was a bit of an aside. Instead of going verse by verse through the chapter we looked at how Paul's overall message here in Galatians can be applied to the churches today and what our response to it should be. We have seen reoccurring themes throughout this book as Paul has been laying forth his argument against the false teachers that had infiltrated the church. Even though we have gone over it a few times I don't think it hurts to just refresh a little since it has been a few weeks since we have been in the early chapters.

In chapter 1 and 2 we see Paul arguing to prove his apostleship. Almost everywhere that Paul would preach and set up a church it wasn't long before men from Jerusalem would come in and work to undermine his teaching. That is what was happening here in Galatia and refuting these false teachers was Paul's main motivation for writing this letter. If you remember, they were saying that Paul was not a true apostle like Peter and James to which Paul refuted by sharing his testimony, and proof showing that not only the gospel that he taught came to him by direct teaching from God, but that it was also the same gospel that Peter and James were teaching in the church at Jerusalem.

In Chapters 3 and now 4 we see that Paul has laid down his argument that Justification before God is only by faith in Christ, and not by the law of Moses. He was reminding the Galatians that the gospel he preached was apart from the law of Moses. In these 2 chapters Paul was reminding the Galatians about when they first heard of Christ.

Throughout chapter 3 and 4 we see Paul put forth 4 different arguments against the Judaizers who were corrupting the Galatians Churches. The first argument was personal. He appealed to their own experience. Chapter 3 versus 1-5.

The Galatians experienced the new birth, They saw Christ in Paul's teaching, they experienced God's free grace, and Paul even mentions that miracles were worked among them, all of this which came by the Spirit through faith, apart from the law. Yet despite all that the Judaizers came in and started convincing them that they needed to follow the mosaic law, be circumcised and become Jews to truly be justified before God. When Paul was writing this letter he was afraid that the faith he saw in them and his work with them might have actually all been in vain.

Then we see Paul put forth his 2<sup>nd</sup> argument which was from Scripture itself. Galatians 3 versus 6-25 Here he is showing that even in the old testament scriptures, that Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation was justified by faith, not from law, for the promise was 430 years before the law. Paul proves in scripture that it is those who are of faith are the true children of Abraham, and just being physical descendants doesn't amount to anything when it comes to justification before God. He says that those who are children of Abraham by faith, are the children of promise and the adopted children of God.

This opens up God's plan of salvation for mankind completely, The Jews believed that you had to be a Jew and that by practicing their laws and traditions a person could be justified before God, but Paul says, no, it isn't just for the Jews, God's plan to reconcile for himself a people is for all peoples, male or female, slave, or free, Jew or Gentile, all of those who are of faith are in Christ Jesus, and if Christ's,

then you are Abraham's seed and Heirs according to the promise.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> argument that Paul uses starts in chapter 4 which is what we read this morning and looked at last week. He was appealing to the relationship that he had with the Galatian Churches. Reminding them that when he first came to them preaching the gospel, all of the blessings and the joy that they received. He said that they accepted him as if he was an angel of God, but now because of these false teachers it is apparent that they were no longer looking at Paul as they once did. He asks them, Have I become your enemy because I tell you the truth?

They were being turned against Paul and what he taught, and now it appears that the Judaizers were successful in accomplishing what they set out to accomplish. They undermined Paul's teaching of free grace by Faith and had the people in the Galatian church converting to Judaism. Paul said that the Judaizers were very zealously working to convince them, but it was not really for the betterment of the Galatians, but rather it was for themselves. He says that the Judaizers were seeking to exclude the Galatians so that they would become followers of them, instead of Christ. When Paul first came to Galatia, he said he was weak, and that there was nothing in him that would convince anyone to follow him, but unlike Paul, these false teachers came in with smooth words, and was convincing people to follow them instead of Christ.

Do we not see that in Christendom today? People who follow preachers who are smooth talkers, as the bible puts it, saying words that tickle the ears instead of following the word. They are more caught up into the personality, and the charisma of these preachers and end up being led astray to false beliefs. I think that is much of what was happening here. I am sure the Judaizers were well spoken, smooth talkers who as we see reading this book Paul wrote were twisting Paul's teaching and turning it into something else entirely.

So there brings us to this week where we will take a look at Paul's 4<sup>th</sup> argument. Here he uses Abraham's wife Sarah, and her handmaiden Hagar to make his illustration. Paul takes the historical account of Sarah, and her handmaiden Hagar and uses it in an allegorical way to show the difference between those who are under the law, and those who are under the promise.

In Verse 21 he asks the Judaizers, and now those who are following them, you say you want to live under the law but do not hear the law? For it was written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and the other by the free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise.

God had promised Abraham a Son, and that he would be the father of many nations. But somewhere along the line Abraham and Sarah grew impatient waiting on God. Sarah now she was past the age of bearing children, and that neither of them were getting any younger. So she offered Hagar her servant to Abraham so that he may have a son. Paul refers to Hagar's son Ishmael here as the one born according to the flesh because it was not the son that God had promised Abraham.

Eventually God blessed Sarah and she was able to conceive and she had a Son. This was the Son that God had promised Abraham and Sarah all those years before. This was the son who was Abraham's promised heir.

So there are few distinctions we can make here. Both of these children had the same father, but they had different mothers and that is where Paul's focus was here. He says that one was born of the flesh, by a bondwoman and the other was born by promise from the free woman. Even though they shared the same father, they inherited their legal standings from their mothers. Ishmael was born of a slave,

and therefor was himself a slave. And Issac being born of a free woman, was therefor a free man.

Another Distinction that Paul is making here about one being born of flesh, and another of promise. Was that one was the working of man through natural ordinary ways, you could say that Abraham was operating under the principle that "God helps those who help themselves" he was trying to take the blessing he was promised rather than waiting on God to deliver it. But reversely the Son of promise was miraculous. It took God's supernatural intervention for Sarah to have children. Issac would not have been born without God's intervention making it possible. Is not the working of the Law and the working of Faith much like the conception of these 2 children?

The keeping of the Mosaic law is man trying to justify himself through his good works, attempting to make himself right before God, just as Abraham and Sarah took it upon themselves to have a son. while the free grace of a supernatural work of God. Granting Faith, and adoption children unto himself. Just like Issac's birth was miraculous, so it is like the new birth of every believer. God took Sarah's barren old womb and gave her a son, just as God removes our heart of stone, replacing it with a heart of flesh so that we may born spiritually.

So Paul says in verse 24, that the birth of these 2 children to Abraham from 2 different women is symbolic representing 2 different covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, which gives birth to bondage which is Hagar. Hagar and her Son Ishmael are symbolic of the Mosaic Law which Paul says is bondage, and he corresponds to the Jews teaching and belief to this old, slave covenant.

Can you imagine how this would anger the Jews. Basically what Paul was saying was even though the Jews are the physical descendants of Abraham they are spiritually illegitimate children. He reasons that since the Jews have given up the gospel to go back under the works of the law they are more like children of Hagar then they are children of Sarah. He says They are not the adopted children of God, the children of Promise, but rather they are spiritually still in bondage. To Quote Spurgeon on this very thing, He said,

Hagar never was a free woman, and Sarah never was a slave. The covenant of works never was free, and none of her children ever were. All those who trust in works never are free, and never can be, even could they be perfect in good works. Even if they have no sin, still they are bond-slaves; for when we have done all that we ought to have done, God is not our debtor; we are debtors still to him, and still remain as bond-slaves. If I could keep all of God's law, I should have no right to favor for I should have done no more than was my duty and be a bond-slave still. This law is the most rigorous master in the world no wise man would love its service' for after all you have done, the law never gives you are thank you for it, but says rather Go on sir, Go on! The poor sinner trying to be saved by the law is like a blind horse going round and round a mill and never getting a step further, but only being whipped continually. The faster he goes, the more work he does, the more he is tired and so much worse for him. The better legalist a man is, the more sure he is of being damned. The more holy a man is, if he trusts to his works, the more he may rest assured of his own final rejection and eternal portion with Pharisees. Hagar was a slave, Ishmael was nothing but a slave and never could be more. Not all the works he ever rendered to his father could ever make him a free-born Son.

So then Paul goes on to say that those who are children of Sarah, it is they who are children of the promise which is the Jerusalem above. He is making the distinction between Abraham's physical children on earth and the promised spiritual children of heaven.

Paul wants the Galatians to see that by the promises of God it is they who are the free children of Sarah. Verse 28 he says Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of the promise. Paul called the

Galatians brothers because they were children of the promise just as he was. As Paul argued in chapter 3, all those who are of faith are children of Abraham there is neither Jew or Gentile. Even though Paul himself was a Jew, and the Galatian believers were gentiles they are now of the same family, brothers because of adoption into God's holy family.

In verse 29 Paul once again referring to historical events warns that those who are born of the spirit will be persecuted by those born of the flesh just as Issac was persecuted by Ishmael. we can read an account in Genesis where it says that when Issac was weened Abraham threw a great feast, but Ishmael who would be about 17 years old at the time was scoffing at Issac. Paul's point was that Christians should expect the same kind of treatment that Isaac received from his big brother.

In fact it was happening in Galatia, the sons of Hagar were persecuting the Sons of Sarah. The Jews were persecuting the Christians, the gentiles who came to Christ were being oppressed by the Judaizers who would not let them live by God's free grace but rather was seeking to oppress them under the Law.

One implication of this is that persecution can be a way to tell the difference between true, and false religion. Paul is saying that if you are born of the spirit, you will be persecuted, and you will be persecuted by those who are not born of the spirit but by those who are born of flesh.

Philip Ryken put it this way. Persecution is the opposition Christians face for speaking or doing God's will. It can include ridicule, loss, violence and even martyrdom. One of the distinguishing marks of a real Christians is that they are willing to suffer persecution for their faith, and even die for it. By contrast it is false religion that always does the persecuting. So whenever people who claim to be religious start to oppress minorities, hate Jews, or attack homosexuals we can be sure that they do not represent true Christianity, even if they do it in the name of Jesus, Sooner or later, they will start to persecute the real Christians as well. Often the most serious persecution comes from people who claim to be religious.

So closing his argument here Paul quotes Sarah in Genesis 21 verse 10. She tells Abraham to Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. By quoting Sarah here Paul, in a not so subtle way was telling the Galatians that they needed to drive out the Judaizers and their legalism. Paul said that by trying to put the Gentiles under the law they proved that they themselves were actually slaves and had no part in God's inheritance. Salvation comes only through grace, and the church should not tolerate any idea of salvation by works and should cast out those who teach such.

So a few things to take note of here in closing. God still works the same way today as he did with Hagar and Sarah, Salvation comes by grace and not by works. Righteousness comes by faith, and not by law.

This is why Christianity is the only religion that offers salvation. It is based on the merit of another, not of ourselves. It is what Christ has done, not what we have done. Other religions are religions of bondage, of slavery and the same can be said about any christian organization that wants to add works and law on top of faith for our righteousness before God.

Another thing to take note, is that in Paul's argument here he says there are 2 Covenants. One covenant leading to slavery, and another leading to salvation. Paul has pointed out throughout Galatians that the law is death, the law is a curse, and yet Christians today will say just as the Judaizers were that we must follow the mosaic Law. They will say, now that you are a son of God, you are able to keep God's laws. Or they will say that it is all one covenant under different administrators. The old under Moses, and the

new under Christ, but that really they are both one and the same. That is not what the bible teaches, not only does Paul say here that there are 2 covenants, it is mentioned throughout scripture of a new covenant. In the old testament it foretells of a new covenant to come, and in the new testament it talks of the new covenant in Christ. So the idea that the mosaic law, and the new covenant are one in the same just under a different administration is wrong, and not even a biblically found view.

The idea of it being one covenant is inconsistent with Paul's teaching here in Galatians. First off he says, there are 2 covenants..so right away we see it is not the same one just being administered differently. And also he likens the law of Moses, the old covenant to Hagar the bond-slave, outside the promises of God, not heir to the promises given to Abraham.

In Galatians 3 Paul points that God's promise to Abraham is greater then the covenant given to Moses, and that covenant can not annul, or make void the promise. So what we have is 2 separate covenants. One, which is the old Covenant given to Moses to the nation of Israel. Where God says, do all these things and I will bless you. Then we have the new Covenant in Christ, which is really the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. It is in this new Covenant in the blood of Christ that we are adopted into the family of God. This was God's plan all along as Paul has pointed out throughout this book. Salvation by grace alone, through faith alone and not of works.

So I ask you, who is your mother? Are you a child of Abraham through Sarah, or Hagar?