

## Bible Verses

1. Genesis 15:3-6 ESV - 3 And Abram said, "Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir." 4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: "This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir." 5 And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 6 And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 16:2-3 ESV - 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.

2. Galatians 4:21-28 ESV - 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.

Exodus 31:18 ESV - 18 And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

3. Galatians 4:29-31 ESV - 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.

Romans 4:3 ESV - 3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

## "Two Sons - Slave and Free"

*Galatians- week #9*

### INTRODUCTION

Paul has been pleading, explaining, reprimanding and admonishing the Galatians for falling back under the law of circumcision in order to be saved. Now he points to a story from the Scriptures and explains what happened when Abraham tried to fulfil God's promise in his own strength. It is the tale of two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. One was born to a mother in bondage, the other to a free woman. In his brief "bible study", Paul points out the importance and the difficulty in trusting God's grace to fulfil His promises, in His perfect timing rather than rushing in to do it in our own power.

### Ice Breaker (Optional—8 min)

Have you ever tackled a home repair yourself only to end up needing a professional to fix it, and your mess, after all?

### STUDY QUESTIONS (45 MIN)

#### Waiting on God's Promise

##### 1. Read Genesis 15:3-6; Genesis 16:2-3

Why would the Galatians want to be circumcised? It turns out they were attempting to be recognized as part of the covenant promise given to Abraham. In the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis God told Abraham "...your very own son shall be your heir." and that he would have more offspring than stars in the sky. Abraham believed the Lord, even though he and Sarah were far past childbearing age. But that's not the end of the story. What happened in Gen 16:2-3?

When Abraham received God's promise, nothing was required of him, not even circumcision (that came much later). All he had to do was wait for the promise and trust God to fulfill it. But after Abraham and Sarah waited for many more years, and they saw themselves growing older and less capable of bearing children, and they began to second

guess God. So together, they devised a plan to have children through Hagar, the Egyptian slave. But that was not the time nor the mother that God had chosen to inherit His promise. Waiting can fray the fabric of our faith. Is there a promise you've had to wait a long time for God to fulfil? How did a time of extensive waiting affect your faith? Are there promises you are still waiting to see come to pass?

### **Mosaic Covenant – the Law**

#### **2. Read Galatians 4:24-28; Exodus 31:18**

Paul tells the Galatians that what happened with these two women and their sons is a representation of the two covenants between God and His people. What did Hagar represent (v. 24)? What covenant took place on Mt Sinai (Exodus 31:18)? Who inhabited Jerusalem in Paul's day, and what enslaved them?

Abraham did not fully trust God and took matters into his own hands. Instead of producing an heir to the promise, Abraham produced a son, Ishmael, who was a slave just like his mother. Likewise, the Jews who were trying to produce their own salvation through observance of the Law of Moses produced a culture of bondage to the law. What do you think we produce when we become legalistic about our faith?

### **Abrahamic Covenant - Grace**

#### **3. Read Galatians 4:29-31**

The Galatians were being pursued by those who were still bound to the law. What parallel does Paul reveal about this in Galatians 4:29? Those false teachers in the Galatian church were trying to blend together the law and the promise, but they just don't go together.

Most of the Christians in Galatia were previously gentiles. So, when Paul says they are like Isaac, the children of the promise, he's confirming that they didn't have to be related to Abraham genealogically, or by following the Jewish laws. God's covenant to Abraham was based solely on what God would do, and our promise of salvation is based solely on what God did through Jesus. Both are promises of God's grace, His undeserved favor freely given. Nevertheless, the Galatians were drawn back into bondage to the law.

Why do you think people who have received grace would walk away and return to a life of bondage? Do you know of someone personally who has done this? If so remember to pray this week for their freedom from bondage and return to the freedom offered by God's grace.

### **WRAP-UP**

The church in Galatia was experiencing tension between the law and grace. But this conflict began much earlier. It was seen in the struggle between Ishmael and Isaac when Abraham and Sarah attempted to produce an heir to God's promise in their own power but instead produced a son who was a slave. When we rely on our own power to produce righteousness we only end up in failure and bondage to the law. But if we have faith in God and allow Him to fulfil His promises in His timing and in His power, then we inherit the gifts of grace and freedom that only God can give.

### **Memory Verse**

*So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.  
-Galatians 4:31NLT*

### **PRAYER (20 MIN)**

Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life: \_\_\_\_\_

Pray for your group members' needs: (see back for more space)

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*Challenge-. Read Genesis chapter 17. In this chapter God changes Abram and Sarai's names to Abraham and Sarah, institutes circumcision as a sign of the covenant and responds to Abraham's request for God to recognize Ishmael. Consider how this relates to being under the law and being under grace.*