

Scripture Reading: Genesis 21

“5 Now Abraham was one hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. 6 And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, and all who hear will laugh with me." 7 She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne him a son in his old age." 8 So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned. 9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing. 10 Therefore she said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac." 11 And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son. 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. 13 Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed." 14 So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting it on her shoulder, he gave it and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba. 15 And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. 16 Then she went and sat down across from him at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, "Let me not see the death of the boy." So she sat opposite him, and lifted her voice and wept. 17 And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, "What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18 Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation." 19 Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. 20 So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. 21 He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

'Hagar and Ishmael Cast Out'

This morning we will consider the separating of the son of promise from the son of the bondwomen!

My task of finding Jesus is not so tough this week since the Apostle Paul gives us considerable commentary on this portion of the Book of Beginnings.

- It is held up to us as a grand allegory of the ongoing battle between human effort and God's Grace!
- We will consider carefully what the Apostle has to teach us and also see some important lessons about knowing God's promises and trusting Him to be faithful!

As we have discussed, Abraham is put forward in the Bible as a man of great faith and our story is building to a climax as God prepares to test this man's faith in an incredible way when he asks him to sacrifice his only son of promise: Isaac!

- There we will see that Abraham has not just learned to be faithful in some general way, but has learned to put his faith in God as His Savior, and the Savior of the world.

Remember, when Jesus has His great debate with the Pharisees in John chapter eight, one of the points He makes is that Abraham longed to see His day: The day that Jesus would come to save His people from their sins...

- The day that God would provide Himself a sacrifice!
- So our text begins this morning with Sarah and Abraham being filled with laughter or joy as they rejoiced over the birth of Isaac.

We learn that at the celebration of Isaac's weaning, or shortly thereafter, this joy is disrupted:

9 "And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing."

The term scoffing is sometimes translated as mocking or can be seen as making fun of the child of promise. Sarah's reaction is swift & severe:

10 Therefore [Sarah] said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac."

This gives us a pretty good idea of what the scoffing or mocking was about: Something along the line of "Yea, let's just wait and see who the heir really is, or who is really Daddy's favorite!"

Abraham sees things differently:

11 "And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son."

Even though it was Sarah who had hatched the fleshly plan to provide the son of promise in their own strength, Abraham had gone along, had grown close to the lad as any father would; and for quite some time DID think his heir would be Ishmael.

- The Lord comes to Abraham to let him know that Sarah is right and to provide some comfort as a father...

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. 13 Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he is your seed."

God reminds Abraham about why they were rejoicing over Isaac and that He had also given promises concerning Ishmael: He would not be forgotten. However, we are also told by the Apostle Paul that these events would serve to greatly instruct the people of God for thousands of years...

The Church at Galatia was being troubled by those who wanted to take these new Christians back to the old ways of the Jewish legalists who thought salvation was earned by doing good works that pleased God.

Paul gives them a very strong rebuke and as he brings his arguments for the true Gospel to a head in Chapter four he turns back to this part of the history of God's salvation: Galatians 4:21: "Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? [*Moses*]"

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, 24 which things are symbolic [or an allegory]."

- As Paul explains the allegory I trust we can see how much confusion about covenants old and new could be cleared up if we simply listen to what this Apostle has to teach!

"For these are the two covenants:"

- OK, a quick pause right there to point out that Paul is NOT teaching that there are only two covenants in the Bible: Only that this history teaches us about TWO of the covenants and two important ones they are!

"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."

Notice how Paul begins with Hagar; first saying she relates to Mt. Sinai where the Law was given and finally to the city of Jerusalem which had fallen into bondage by missing Jesus as we discussed at length last week.

He then compares that City with the New Jerusalem that John saw coming down from heaven: The Lamb's wife! And this city is not in bondage but has great rejoicing over its MANY children just as Abraham and Sarah did over Isaac:

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."

- Just as Sarah rejoiced at the birth of one son, we as a Church should rejoice as we see the many children of the promise come to new life!

BUT Paul is not finished because we are going to face the same challenge that Sarah had long ago:

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."

Before we continue in our morning text we should note a very important lesson for our married women & young ladies who are preparing to be married:

In coming to Abraham God said, "Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called."

Now we could beat up on Sarah because this whole mess was largely her doing in the first place and many even say she is over-reacting to what Ismael has done here.

- But God tells Abraham to do what Sarah has said to do!

Now remember that she is commended in the New Testament as the faithful wife who called Abraham Lord: If you listen to the feminists, inside or outside of the Church, you would get the impression that the Bible wants women to be seen and not heard, to be servants and not equals with men.

- Well in fact the Bible says no such thing, but instead from the beginning considered the woman as the helpmeet of the man!

She is the one as they become one flesh in marriage who often provides wisdom & balance in the relationship! In fact here in this case it was Sarah who actually saw what was really going on as explained by the Apostle Paul where he tells us that Ishmael persecuted the child of promise.

That is similar language to what is used to describe how those lads, who later became lunch for the bears, were mocking or persecuting the Prophet Elisha.

[if any thinks this mother and son being sent away is harsh, please remember that one!]

We could also think of Abigail whose wisdom and swift action saved her family from the wrath of King David coming forth as a result of the foolishness of her husband.

So, while a godly woman does not seek to usurp the authority of men in the home or church, she is busy making sure that right decisions are being made as she functions as a helpmeet.

- One needs only go back and reread the portion about the faithful wife in Proverbs chapter thirty-one or consider how the Gospel accounts reveal the actions of faithful women to see this truth as we should.

So Abraham gets the point and proceeds to follow the advice of Sarah.

14 "So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting it on her shoulder, he gave it and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba."

It is important to remember here that the English words boy or lad used in our text are referring to Ishmael who is at least 17 years old at this point! Abraham is sending two grown people off with proper provisions.

Many of the commentators also make a big deal out of his rising early and how difficult this was for Abraham. I guess you have to decide just what type of obedience Abraham is exhibiting here...

Is he obeying joyfully or grudgingly? *[use the taking out the garbage example]*

From the time that Abraham left his homeland we have seen him grow in his faith and I think it continues here: Since the promise of an heir back in chapter twelve, we have seen Abraham go from at first a simple: How? To a fleshly trust that resulted in the birth of Ishmael...

To a fuller trust when he believed that Sarah would yet have a son... To now having a fuller trust: Willing and able to send away the bond woman and her son born of the flesh!

- And God will shortly confirm this hearty faith and trust when he sends Abraham to Mount Moriah!

Our chapter closes with what happens to Hagar and Ishmael and even here we see more lessons about trust... I think we can argue that Hagar would not have left with a good attitude and even though she had God's promise that her son would be well cared for things quickly go from bad to worse.

15 "And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs. 16 Then she went and sat down across from him at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, "Let me not see the death of the boy." So she sat opposite him, and lifted her voice and wept."

Here we certainly see the agony of a mother's love when a child is threatened... Death in a desert is NOT a pretty sight and this she knew well. She is torn and while placing the boy in some shade and putting some distance between them so she does not have to hear him suffer, she keeps him within view none the less.

- We know that her weeping was not one of repentance nor even crying out to God for help because notice what we see in verse 17:
- "And God heard the voice of the lad."

We are not told what the boy said or even what his attitude was, but God responds to His dilemma for the sake of his promise to both Abraham and Hagar... Promises that we saw in both chapters 16 and 17 that Ishmael would be the father of nations... That would not happen if he died childless in the desert...

- Something Hagar should have remembered and appealed to in her despair!

"Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, "What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. 18 Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation."

This reminds me in some ways about how God responds to the prayers of Joshua after the defeat at Ai: God does not say, Joshua I have heard your prayer and will tell you what the problem is... No God says to Joshua, "Get up! Why do you lie thus on your face? Israel has sinned!" In that case it should have been obvious what the problem was...

- And here with Hagar she should have known this lad was NOT going to die in the desert!

Think about how often we who are spiritual do the same: We make terrible financial decisions and then we are soon on our knees in prayer saying WHY God do I not have enough money???

Or we go with the most modern child-rearing plans for discipline rather than the clear teaching of the Bible and again find ourselves on our knees begging God for obedient children!

God's simple answer is going to be get up and deal with the sin in the camp!

- And as we touched on last week, how much anxiety do we have in our lives because we don't really believe God's promises?

**And another very important lesson to learn here from Hagar is that such anxiety can actually hide the very thing that God is providing as the solution to our problems... Notice what it says in verse 19”
“Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.”**

It does NOT say that God took her to a place where there was a well... God did not suddenly create a well...

No it says that her eyes were opened... Like the eyes of those disciples who had walked and talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus and knew him not because they were too busy having a pity party...

We could think of the prophet Elijah who had to be reminded that God had thousands of faithful Saints when the prophet thought he was all alone! Or need I point out how often we suffer through financial, physical, material or even spiritual difficulties when the help we need is right here in the Body of Christ?

- **A place where the Spirit of God suggests that we look first!**

And finally we see that God keeps His promise even to the son of the bond- woman:

“And she went and filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. 20 So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. 21 He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. ”

Even though Ishmael was not the son of promise, God would be faithful to this son of Abraham... When we get to Genesis chapter twenty five we will see the twelve nations that came from Ismael just as God had promised to Abraham and Hagar. Later we will see the Ishmaelites joined with Esau in marriage and later still they will be the merchants who carry Joseph to Egypt as a slave.

- **Truly God does work together ALL things for the good of those who love Him!**

As Joseph would later remind his brothers after the death of their father, what they intended for evil, God had used for the good of His people.

- **So yes, we are thankful that the Son of Promise came and was protected by God!**

Please remember that the Apostle Paul left us with an important task in that portion of Galatians we considered this morning:

- **We must be ready and willing to protect the children of promise today in the Church from the Sons of the Bondwoman!**
- **And there is more...**

After explaining the allegory we are to see and learn from in our text, the Apostle Paul appeals to the Saints at Galatia, and all of us, to then make good choices!

Galatians 5:1 “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. 2 Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. 3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. 4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace. 5 For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. 6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.”

Communion Meditation: Psalm 36:7-9

“How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. 8 They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, And You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. 9 For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light. ”