

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

Our Mission: Reaching out to leaders who can change the world.

Jesus + _____ = Salvation?

June 2012

Lesson #11 - Galatians – Hagar – Sarah; Flesh - Promise; Slave - Free

INTRODUCTION

In your family, how were you and your siblings each treated differently?

OBSERVATION/INTERPRETATION

Read Gal 4:21 – 4:31

Note: The story of Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, was a well-worn text in rabbinic exegesis and would have lent itself to supporting the Judaizers' claim that only those who belonged physically to the family of Abraham had any share in the promise God made to him. To put it more starkly, the descendants of Isaac were the Jews; and those of Ishmael, the Gentiles. At Mount Sinai the Jews had received the enlightenment of the law while the Gentiles remained in the darkness of sin, alienated from the promises of God and the commonwealth of Israel.¹

1. Before the Galatians truly gave themselves over to the Law, what did Paul ask them to consider?
2. What was the difference in status between Abraham's two sons?
3. How were Abraham's sons conceived? Gen 16:1-5; 21:1-7
4. How did Paul refer to the birth of Abraham's sons? Vv 24-27
5. In what way did Hagar typify first-century Jerusalem? V 25
6. How was Sarah an example of the "Jerusalem that is above"? Vv 26-27
7. How were the Galatians like Isaac (the child of promise)? V 28
8. How were the Judaizers like Ishmael (the child of slavery)? V 29
9. How did Paul compare Isaac's persecution of Ishmael to the legalists' opposition to the Christians? Vv 29-30
10. Do you feel like a child of Hagar or a child of Sarah? Why?
11. In what ways do Christians try to impose extra-biblical standards on one another?
12. Which of your own rules or personal standards are you tempted to require of others?
13. What should you do when people who try to impose their extra-biblical standards on you?

APPLICATION

- What can you do this week to encourage other Christians to enjoy their freedom in Christ?
- What will you do this week to help you avoid unfairly imposing your own standards on others?

Abraham and Sarah tried their own plan. *Ishmael was the product of their hurry and self-reliance. When Abraham had relied on his own power and ingenuity to get a son, Ishmael was the result. When Abraham relied on the promise alone, and stopped trying to do it himself, Isaac was the result. It was, simply, a contrast of the natural versus the supernatural way. Abraham had operated on the wrong assumption, a fleshly assumption if you will. He began to believe that the promised heir would be his responsibility to get, but it was not. Isaac was not born according to the flesh because his birth was the result of God's supernatural intervention in fulfillment of His own promise. So Abraham learned his lesson. The only acceptable response to God's merciful promise is trust in that promise, not works of the flesh that try to bring down God's blessing with our own efforts.*

Paul Decker, SermonCentral.com

¹ George, T. (2001). *Vol. 30: Galatians* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (334). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.