

# **GALATIANS: THE ONE TRUE GOSPEL**



## **WEEK 19 WHO'S YOUR MOMMA? A TALE OF TWO COVENANTS GALATIANS 4:21-5:1**

Van Nuys Bible Study  
Doulos Fellowship Group  
Grace Community Church

Prepared by Hans Kaufman  
2015

## Galatians 4:21-5:1 – Who’s Your Momma? A Tale of Two Covenants

---

### The Text

---

Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman.

But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar.

Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. 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.”

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

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.

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.”

So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

---

## Introduction

---

- “False brothers” (the Judaizers) have infiltrated the churches in Galatia.
- Paul is astonished that some of the Galatians are abandoning the gospel freedom to be justified by obedience to the law.
- He has stressed the superiority of the promise God made to Abraham and the inferiority of the law to bring salvation.
- The law was not given to replace the promise, but to increase transgressions and show how important the promise really is.
- Paul is now pleading with them to not return in slavery to the law...

---

## Principal Proposition

---

We are either sons of slavery to the law or free children of the promise. If Christ has set you free, it is stupid to act like slaves.

---

## Literary Context

---

- A. Paul's Gospel is God's Gospel (1:11-2:21)
- B. Paul's Explanation of the Gospel (3:1-4:11)
- C. Paul's Application of the Gospel (4:12-6:10)
  - 1. **The Plea not to Return to Bondage (4:12-31)**
  - 2. **The Appeal to Stand Firm in Freedom (5:1)**

---

## Literary Structure

---

### Who's Your Momma? A Tale of Two Covenants

The Inquiry	(v. 21)
The Story	(v. 22-23)
The Allegory	(v. 24-29)
The Remedy	(v. 30-31)
The Battle Cry	(v. 1)

---

## Interpretive Comments

---

### Who's Your Momma? A Tale of Two Covenants

#### The Inquiry

- v. 21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?
- “Tell me, you who desire to be under law”
    - Listen up, Judaizers! Paul addresses the trouble-makers and those who have fallen prey to their deception directly.
  - “do you not listen to the law”
    - Here, Paul is referring not just to the commandments given to Moses on Sinai, but the first five books of the Bible as a unit.
    - He asks a similar question to Jesus’, “Have you not read...?”

#### The Story

- v. 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman.
- “For it is written that Abraham had two sons”
    - The background for this passage can be found in Genesis 16-17 and 21.
    - Paul returns to Abraham for a final time – the one who the Judaizers based a large part of their argument (Matthew 3:9; John 8).
    - He uses Abraham’s sons as physical representations of opposing spiritual truths. Only one of them received the blessing. His allegory is full of contrasts.



v22	Ishmael – Two Sons – Isaac	
v23	Slave Woman	Free Woman
	According to the Flesh	Through the Promise
v24	Hagar – Two Covenants – Sarah	
v25-26	Slavery	Freedom
	Present Jerusalem	Heavenly Jerusalem
v29	Persecutor	Persecuted

➤ “one by a slave woman and one by a free woman”

- Hagar was Sarah’s slave. Both gave him sons (Genesis 16, 21:1-6).

v. 23 But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

➤ “But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh”

- The “flesh” often refers to wicked desires, worldly principles, and the contamination of sin.
- Ishmael was born because Abraham and Sarah tried to take matters into their own hands.

➤ “while the son of the free woman was born through promise”



- Sarah miraculously gave birth to Isaac just as God had promised – long after her childbearing years had passed.
- There are two differences between the two sons. They had different mothers and Ishmael’s conception was natural while Isaac’s was miraculous.

## The Allegory

v. 24 Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar.

➤ “Now this may be interpreted allegorically”

- According to the Oxford English Dictionary, an allegory is a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.



- Steve Lawson says that an allegory is a parable on steroids.
- These historical events are significant in more ways than one.
- Some people get upset with Paul over this allegorical section of Scripture. Do you know why?
- How can we reconcile the issue?

➤ “these women are two covenants”

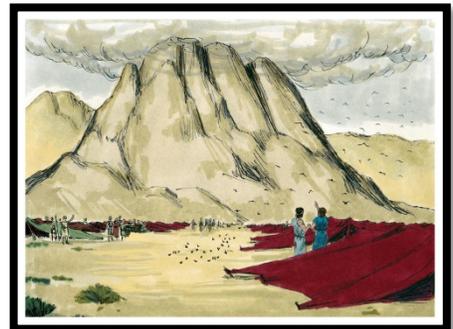
- The first covenant is founded in works while the second covenant is established in grace (the result of a promise God made).

*The covenant of works was, “Do this and live, O man!” but the covenant of grace is, “Do this, O Christ, and you will live, O man!” The difference of the covenants rests here. The one was made with man, the other with Christ.*

– Charles Spurgeon

➤ “One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar”

- Mount Sinai is where God established His covenant with Israel (Exodus 19-34).
- Hagar was Sarah’s slave and so was her child.



v. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children.

➤ “Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem”

- Roman Arabia included much of modern day Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and southern Syria.
- Mount Sinai is located in a barren wilderness.
- Present Jerusalem remains the capital of Israel according to the flesh (Jews who do not serve Jesus).

➤ “for she is in slavery with her children”

- The old covenant and those who fall under it are in slavery.
- All unbelievers are in slavery to sin and under the curse that the covenant at Sinai declares over everyone who fails to meet its conditions.

v. 26 But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

➤ The real Jerusalem is in spiritual – in Heaven (Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 12:18, 22).

*Heaven, the Jerusalem above, will continue to be populated with the born-from-above saints of God until every predestined believer has entered. – John MacArthur*

v. 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.”

➤ This Old Testament reference comes from Isaiah 54:1.



v. 28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

➤ It is by the grace of God and His promises that we are what we are.

v. 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.

➤ “But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit”

- The Israeli-Arab conflict began between Isaac and Ishmael almost 4000 years ago.
- Both people groups trace their lineage back to the Abraham.

➤ “so also it is now”

- The physical and spiritual descendants of Hagar still persecute the physical and spiritual descendants of Sarah.

*Whether within Judaism or Christianity, legalists have always been persecutors. Those who trust in God have always been persecuted by those who trust in themselves. – John MacArthur*

### The Remedy

v. 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.”

➤ “But what does the Scripture say?”

- Paul loves to drive the point home with Scripture.

➤ “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.”

- Just as Isaac and Ishmael could not share a bedroom, we cannot afford to share the church with those who teach justification by works.
- Those who are slaves will not inherit eternal life with those who are free.

v. 31 So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

➤ Repetition is the key to learning. The key to learning is repetition.

## The Battle Cry

v. 1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

➤ “For freedom Christ has set us free”

- Christ has set us free... to be free!
- This freedom is from slavery to the law and its obligations, but not the moral law of Christ (Galatians 5:14-6:1).



➤ “stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery”

- Paul throws this verse out there as a summary of everything that has come before. It also acts as a transition into the call of freedom.
- After defending his right to preach the gospel and the gospel itself, he issues the command to stand firm in the faith.
- The “yoke” represents obedient submission.
- Paul does not want anything to take the place of Christ in the Galatians’ lives (Matthew 11:29; Acts 15:10), especially the law.

---

## Summary Observations

---

- Who do the Judaizers take after? Which son can we relate to?
- The Isaacs should not envy the Ishmaels.
- Christianity and Judaism claim father Abraham. The real question is:  
**Who is your mother and how were you born?**
- If Hagar is our mother, we were born of human means are still slaves. If Sarah is our mother, we have been born of a promise and are free men.

---

## Summary Quote

---

*We need to remind ourselves that if we are Christians, we are already free. We are called to live out the freedom that is already ours and not turn back to slavery. We are to live under grace instead of under the law.*

*– Thomas Schreiner*

---

## Discussion Questions

---

- Some people get upset over this allegorical section of Scripture. Do you know why?  
(pg. 4)
- How can we reconcile the issue (Paul's allegorizing of Old Testament narrative)?  
(pg. 4)



---

## Final Food For Thought

---

What is the difference between adoption and regeneration?

\* \* \* \* \*

### *Adoption*

The gift of justification (that is, of present acceptance by God, the world's Judge) is accompanied by the gift of adoption, that is, of becoming a child of the heavenly Father (Gal. 3:26; 4:4–7). In Paul's world, adoption was ordinarily of young adult males of good character to become heirs and maintain the family name for rich people who otherwise had no children. Paul, however, proclaims God's gracious adoption of persons of bad character to become "heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

Justification is the basic blessing on which adoption is founded; adoption is the crowning blessing for which justification clears the way. Adopted status belongs to all who receive Christ (John 1:12). In and through Christ God loves His adopted children as He loves His only begotten Son, and will share with them the glory that is Christ's now (Rom. 8:17, 38, 39). Believers are under God's fatherly care and discipline (Matt. 6:26; Heb. 12:5–11). They are to pray to God as their own Father in heaven (Matt. 6:5–13), imitate His virtues (Matt. 5:44–48; 6:12, 14, 15; 18:21–35; Eph. 4:32–5:2), and trust His fatherly love (Matt. 6:25–34), thus expressing the filial instinct that the Holy Spirit has implanted in them (Rom. 8:15–17; Gal. 4:6).

Adoption and regeneration accompany each other as two aspects of the salvation that Christ brings (John 1:12, 13) but they should be distinguished. Adoption results in a new relationship, while regeneration is a change of our moral nature. Yet the connection is clear. God wants His children, whom He loves, to have His character, and He takes action accordingly.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> R. C. Sproul, ed., *The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version* (Orlando, FL; Lake Mary, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2005), 1698.