

Galatians—Grace Above the Law
Our Freedom in Christ

Lesson 7—Galatians 4.21-31

Continuing from last week's lesson...

Prayer

Start by praying over the passage and asking the Holy Spirit to give you fresh insights and wisdom in understanding it. Then read through the entire passage two or three times.

Scripture Meditation/Memorization

One of the most fundamental and rewarding Christian disciplines that pays back in full spiritual dividends is Bible meditation/memorization. It is an absolutely fundamental in the formation of your spiritual development, spiritual walk and faith growth. In Psalm 1:1-2 (NLT), the Psalmist warrior, King David said,

*“Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked,
or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers.
But they delight in the law of the Lord,
meditating on it day and night.”*

Use the suggested verse(s) to meditate on during the course of this week's study.

MEMORY VERSE

*“[31] So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.”—
Galatians 4:31 (ESV)*

Galatians 4:21-31—*Two Covenants*

The Jews of this era felt that Scripture had not only a primary but also often a secondary or figurative meaning. The historical events described in verses 21 through 31 did actually occur (as recorded in Genesis 16 and 21) but Paul points out these events also had a figurative or allegorical meaning as well.

Here is a brief recap of the background story. God had promised Abraham abundant offspring but after waiting many years the promise had yet to be fulfilled (at this time Abraham was 86 and Sarah, his wife, was 76 years old). Sarah, following a custom of the region at this time, offered her female slave, Hagar, to her husband in order to bear a child. The son born of Hagar was named Ishmael (*God hears*) and became the father of the Arab peoples. Thirteen years later, God opened Sarah's womb and she conceived and gave birth to a son, Isaac (*he laughs*). When Isaac was weaned Ishmael mocked him, resulting in Hagar and Ishmael's expulsion from Abraham's presence. It is interesting to note that the Arab-Israeli hostility dates back over 4,000 years to Ishmael and Isaac.

1. Through a historical lens the Hebrews writer looks back on these events and what does he conclude? (see Hebrews 11:11-13)

2. One covenant is represented by Hagar, Ishmael, Mount Sinai, and the present (45 A.D.) Jerusalem.

- a. What links all of these together?

- b. What does it represent? What does it mean for those who cling to or follow this covenant?

3. Another covenant is represented by Sarah, Isaac, Mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem.

a. What links all of these together?

b. What does it represent? (Hebrews 12:18, 22 and Philippians 3:20 may help)

c. What does it mean for those who cling to or follow this covenant?

4. *Paul turns to those who 'desire to be under the law' (4.21), and invites them to consider the logical outcome of their position. Why is physical descent from Abraham of itself irrelevant?¹

5. *In what ways have you been "in slavery" under the principles of the world?²

¹ Question taken from The Message of Galatians, The Bible Speaks Today commentary, Inter-Varsity Press-USA, 1986

² Question taken from The Wiersbe Bible Study Series: Galatians, published by David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, CO, 2010

a. What does it mean to you that you are a son...and no longer a slave?

b. How does that impact the way you live each day?

6. Just as Isaac's birth was a miracle as a result of God's promise, so is our spiritual re-birth as Paul writes in verse 28. We are told in the next two verses to get rid of the slave woman and her son because they will not share in God's inheritance. What would that look like in practice in our life?

7. *If you're feeling more like the slave woman's son, what steps do you need to take to embrace the inheritance offered to those who are free like Isaac?³

a. Do you need to work on accepting the gift of your inheritance through Christ?

³ Question taken from The Wiersbe Bible Study Series: Galatians, published by David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, CO, 2010

b. Do you need to rediscover joy?

Lesson Five Summary/Take Away

If one of your friends at work or a neighbor were to ask you what you did on Tuesday, you would tell them you went to a Bible study. The next question would likely be, "What did you learn?" We often summarize an entire athletic contest or a movie in a few brief sentences and easily convey the essence of the event. Now apply these same skills to give a summary of the passage in a sentence or two. Then, in an additional sentence or two, describe what impact this passage will have on how you live.

Key Words/Phrases

Write out the definition of these key words. You can use a regular dictionary or go to one of the Greek sources listed in the Tool Box at the end of the study. You may also use a concordance to see where else and how the word is used in the Bible. How would these phrases instruct or encourage us today?

Born According to the Spirit (Galatians 4:29)

Tool Box

Step 1: The Bible. Read the passage in a couple of different versions. If you are having trouble understanding a passage, choose a more dynamic version such as *New Living Translation*. To focus in on the exact meaning of a verse, choose a more literal translation such as *English Standard Version*, *New American Standard Bible* or *New King James Version*.

Step 2: Study Tools. Use these to help you dig deeper. Background Information: 1) Unger's Bible Dictionary, 2) Bible Dictionaries online at biblestudytools.com and blueletterbible.com. (recommend both David Guzick and Chuck Smith's commentaries/study notes); Word Studies: 1) Zodhiates' *The Complete Word Study New Testament*, 2) Vine's *Complete Expository Dictionary*, and 3) Strong's *Dictionary of Bible Words*.

Step 3: Commentaries. Commentaries should not be used in place of studying God's Word directly, but they can give you additional insights. Some good commentaries include: Warren Wiersbe, J. Vernon McGee, F.F. Bruce, *the Expositors Bible Commentary*, *NIV Application Commentary*, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (edited by Walvoord & Zuck), *the Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, and William Barclay (*great for background and culture, but be careful of his spiritual applications).

Step 4: Online Assistance. Should you have a specific question about the study please e-mail your inquiry to: mannyqwcm@gmail.com

