

Children of the Promise

Galatians 4:21-5:1

Summary

Human ingenuity and advancements are incredible blessings in areas like medicine, transportation, and technology. However, the mindset that believes human effort can solve any problem or optimize any process is highly detrimental to our faith. Paul illustrates this through an Old Testament story to warn us against this posture of the heart and to call us toward the freedom of relying entirely on God's power and faithfulness to fulfill His promises.

I. The Question and The Story (Galatians 4:21-23)

Paul challenges the Galatians who desire to be under the Old Covenant by asking if they actually listen to what the Old Testament teaches. He points them to the story of Abraham and Sarah, who, after waiting ten years for God's promised heir, resorted to human pragmatism. They arranged for Abraham to have a child, Ishmael, with their slave Hagar. Ishmael was born "according to the flesh," representing human effort and taking matters into their own hands. In contrast, God waited 25 years until Abraham was "as good as dead" (Romans 4) and Sarah was post-menopausal to miraculously give them Isaac. Isaac was born "through promise," demonstrating God's exclusive power to do what human effort cannot.

III. The Interpretation (Galatians 4:24-27; Hebrews 12:22; Psalm 87)

Paul uses this historical event as an analogy to contrast the two covenants. Hagar represents the Old Covenant from Mount Sinai and the "present Jerusalem," (Judaism under the Law) which now only produces spiritual slaves relying on their own obedience. Sarah represents the New Covenant and the "Jerusalem above," which is free and produces miraculous children born of the Spirit. Relying on human effort to be right with God makes a person a slave who works endlessly but never actually inherits the promises. The New Covenant produces a massive, miraculous family from every tribe and nation, brought in solely by the powerful work of God.

IV. The Application (Galatians 4:28-5:1; Genesis 25:21; Romans 4:16-21)

Like Isaac, we are children of the promise who became heirs not through obedience to the law or cleaning up our lives, but through the gracious, miraculous intervention of a sovereign God. Those who rely on the flesh will always persecute those born of the Spirit, but those trusting in human effort will ultimately be cast out. Because Christ has set us free, we must stand firm and refuse to return to a yoke of slavery.

This truth calls us to 1) **patient trust** instead of forcing God's hand, 2) **persistent prayer** for Him to move, and 3) **passionate praise** because God alone gets the glory for fulfilling His promises.