



In one sentence, can you summarize your life?

AN OLD STORY AND A NEW MEANING

Galatians 4:21-31, "Tell me this--you who want to be subject to the law, you listen to it being read to you, don't you? Well, then, it stands written in it that Abraham had two sons; one was the son of the slave girl and one was the son of the free woman. But the son of the slave girl was born in the ordinary human way, whereas the son of the free woman was born through a promise. Now these things are an allegory. For these two women stand for two covenants. One of these covenants--the one which originated on Mount Sinai--bears children who are destined for slavery--and that one is represented by Hagar. Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai, which is in Arabia, and corresponds to the present Jerusalem; for she is a slave and so are her children. But the Jerusalem which is above is free and she is our mother. For it stands written, "Rejoice, O barren one, who never bore a child; break forth into a shout of joy, O you who know not the pangs of bearing a child; for the children of her who was left alone are more than those of her who had a husband." But we, brothers, are in the same position as Isaac; we are children of promise. But in the old days the child who was born in the ordinary human way persecuted the child who was born in the spiritual way; and exactly the same thing happens now. But what does the scripture say? "Cast out the slave girl and her son, for the son of the slave girl must not inherit with the son of the free woman." So we, brothers, are children not of the slave girl but of the free woman. It is for this freedom that Christ has set us free.

Galatians 5:1, "Stand firm therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and don't be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

For the scholarly Jew, especially Rabbis, scripture had more than one meaning.

- The literal meaning was sometimes regarded as the least important.
- The congregational Jew would hear what the Rabbis wanted them to hear. Many times they were not allowed to read the text for themselves.

Jesus came in and quoted the text verbatim. He often answered by quoting Scripture from the Prophets and the Torah (1st five books of the Old Testament)...or would illustrate via a parable to emphasize an important point (moral tale to illustrate a moral point).

Parable = a simple story used to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson, as told by Jesus in the Gospels. Jesus used simple stories to illustrate complex moral and theological concepts.

Allegory, by contrast, tends to be book- or feature-length. Every character represents a different moral or political concept or viewpoint, and the true meaning of **the story is left for the reader to interpret, and different readers interpret the true meaning differently.**

THIS IS AND HAS BEEN A PROBLEM FROM THE BEGINNING...OF THE WORD OF GOD BEING WRITTEN AND READ... (Leaving the reader to interpret the Word of God without acknowledging the Holy Spirit's intervention into our thinking process).

Denominational differences, Familial differences, Political differences, etc.

Even what is a sin and not a sin; marriage and living together; what acts are an abomination to God!

Paul was a trained Rabbi; and that is what he is doing here. He takes the story involving Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael and Isaac ([Genesis 16:1-16](#); [Genesis 17:1-27](#), [Genesis 21:1-34](#)), which in the Old Testament is a straightforward narrative and he uses it as an illustration to prove his point.

You have to be very clear here as to what Paul is doing. He has the attention of his audience and he wants to get across the difference between God allowing something to happen (because of man's fleshly desires and questionable intervention of what is best) and what the promise of God (that which has been promised by God and it can't be changed by man). God's promises are "Yes" and "Amen."

The outline of the story is as follows: Abraham and Sarah were far advanced in years and Sarah had no child. God had come and promised that Sarah would have a child, which was so difficult to believe that it appeared impossible to Abraham and Sarah.

Sarah used Hagar, her slave girl, to have sexual relations with Abraham, Sarah's husband, to bear a child on Sarah's behalf.

Note: You did not hear Abraham complaining about it.

This is why I love Joseph's story about he and Potiphar's wife more than I do about any story besides the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus than any in the Bible. It hits home with every man and woman.

We know that Hagar became pregnant by Abraham and she had a son called Ishmael. However, in due time God's literal and not allegorical promise was fulfilled...Isaac was born.

Ishmael was born of the ordinary human impulses of the flesh; Isaac was born because of God's promise; and Sarah was a free woman, while Hagar was a slave girl.

From the beginning Hagar had been inclined to triumph over Sarah, because barrenness was a sore shame to a woman; there was an atmosphere charged with trouble.

Anytime sexual activity is done without approval by God's standards...Man is destined for trouble.

Hagar stands for the old covenant of the law, made on Mount Sinai, which is in fact in Arabia, the land of Hagar's descendants.

Hagar's child was born from merely human impulses; and legalism is the best that man can do.

On the other hand Sarah stands for the new covenant in Jesus Christ, God's new way of dealing with men not by law but by grace. Her child was born free according to God's promise--and all his descendants must be free.

If you want to be part of God's Kingdom and inheritance, it must come through THE GRACE AND MERCY OF GOD.

Galatians 5:1, "Stand firm therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and don't be entangled again with a yoke of bondage."

Standing firm is the call of God for us as we battle against evil and ungodly desires.

There are 34 Scriptures telling God's people to stand firm or telling God's people that God stands firm to the end! Again...HIS PROMISES ARE "YES AND AMEN."



THE POINT OF IT ALL (Galatians 4:21-5:1)

Paul's point is less about the persons of Sarah and Hagar, or even Isaac and Ishmael. It is more about the calamity of what results when we take the reigns of our life.

When we step into the promise God has made, hurrying it along to fulfillment, we undercut God's glory and His planned objective.

Paul is showing us that:

- **Whenever we believe we must help God achieve his promises, we ruin them.**
- **Whenever we step in with our ability, we step out of the place of blessing and into the place of destruction.**
- **We trade freedom for slavery.**
- **We must be careful how we treat the promises of God. We may treat them like a grand potential rather than a divine grace.**
- **This isn't a slight deviation from faith, nor is it a truer definition of it. Rather, it is the repudiation of faith altogether. It's our prideful conclusion that God needs us to bring about his divine purpose.**

Therefore, when we believe adding our works to God's grace gives us extra credit on his salvation test, our perfect score turns into a failing one. The gospel, if it shows us anything at all, proves God needs only himself to fulfill the promises. The only thing we add to the salvation story is the sin that makes it necessary, not the remedy that makes it achievable.

SCRIPTURES ON STANDING FIRM

Exodus 14:13b, "...Do not be afraid. **Stand firm** and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again."

2 Chronicles 20:17, "You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; **stand firm** and see the deliverance the Lord will give you..."

Psalms 33:11, "But the plans of the Lord **stand firm** forever, the purposes of his heart through all generations."

Psalms 89:2, "I will declare that your love **stands firm** forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself."

Psalms 119:89, "Your word, Lord, is eternal; it **stands firm** in the heavens."

Matthew 10:22, "You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who **stands firm** to the end will be saved."

1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, **stand firm**. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

1 Corinthians 16:13, "Be on your guard; **stand firm** in the faith; be courageous; be strong."

Hebrews 4:16, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."



Proverbs 10:25, "When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever."