

Abraham (Part Seven)

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We are going to go back to Genesis 15th chapter and get involved with Abraham once again. We will do just a little bit of review first though. I think that I titled this Abrahams trials with God's promise. We have to, I think, in order to get some of these best instruction from this, is not to look on it as merely an historical event that is reported here for the continuity of the Bible, but to look at it as something that is recorded for us to understand and make use of. It is something typical of what you and I will be going through in our lives, and here it shows many of the promises that come upon us directly as a result of having difficulties with what God promises He will do for us.

He told Abraham that he would have peace, and yet quite a number of years have gone by and Abraham is still challenged. That is the subject of chapter 15. Abraham is not doubting that God will come through with His promises, but he wanted to know some of the nuts and bolts about it. How is this thing going to be worked out? He wanted understanding. So he went to the right source, but as is typical with God, He did not give a direct answer. I think you will see this in the life of Christ. Christ did not give direct answers either. He always seemed to answer things with a question and make people determine what the answer is through experiences. Well that is what happened here. It says in verse 6,

Genesis 15:6 And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.

Then came the experience with the sacrifice. The lesson is contained within that event. Abraham was going to understand through sacrifice. I do not mean the *making* of a sacrifice, that was just typical as well. But rather the sacrifice, or we might call it, the yielding of himself by submission in life to God was what was going to reveal the understanding that Abraham wanted.

It is a principle for you and me to understand—understanding comes through sacrifice. That is how we learn what God is, how we learn to know God. So God made him go through this period and then you and I can understand it.

There are all kinds of distractions that were pressing in on Abraham while he was going through this appointed sacrifice. There were the vultures that came that he had to chase away. You might call that, distractions through or by principalities or powers. Vultures are unclean birds that are used in the Bible as symbols of demonic powers. Then the darkness came on and that is symbolic of not knowing truth, and it often teaches you and me that our lives alternate between light and darkness. There are times that we understand, that we know, we see things clearly, we see the light. There are other times where we are in the dark, we do not know what is going on. We feel completely at the mercy of all the forces that are around us.

There is another lesson: that darkness is not overcome by sleeping, you do not go to sleep. Remember the Ten Virgins, they all slumbered and slept. But rather, the answer the person wants in overcoming a problem comes through going through the trial with God. I Corinthians 10:13, “God will always provide a way of escape.” You do not lay down on the job, you keep going on driven by faith.

Then it says, a burning torch passed through the midst of it. The burning torch represents a combination of light and truth coming, understanding coming. It also represents a burning fiery furnace, certification of cleansing through a fiery trial through much tribulation. That is how the Kingdom of God is won, through much tribulation and fiery trials which all lead to the Kingdom of God. So, when the fire comes, it either burns away the dross or it burns up, either one or the other. The trial ahead ends with light being shed, Abraham understood.

There is something that we skipped over getting to this.

Genesis 15:13-16 Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to

your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

Now, Abraham’s question was: How is this going to be? So, in the midst of it, God makes a prophecy so that Abraham would understand that the prophecy was not to be fulfilled in his life. He was going to go to his grave at a good old age, the first indication that the 400 years are involved here are not going to begin until Abraham passes from the scene by dying.

Genesis 25:7-8 This is the sum of the years of Abraham’s life which he lived: one hundred and seventy-five years. Then Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people.

Abraham was born (I told you before), in 1972 BC. One hundred seventy-five years from that brings one out to 1797 BC. It says in Genesis 15, “that your descendants will be strangers [oppressed and afflicted] in a land that is not theirs.” These two scriptures say Abraham was not afflicted in his own land, and the four hundred years applied to his descendants. The four hundred years cannot begin at least until Abraham died. What we have to find out now is when does it end? We know that it cannot begin until at least 1797 BC, because that is when Abraham died. If we can find out when it ended we can find out for sure when it began.

Joshua 13:1 Now Joshua was old, advanced in years. And the Lord said to him: “You are old, advanced in years, and there remains very much land yet to be possessed. This is the land that yet remains . . .

Then He gives a list of the land that yet remains to be possessed.

Joshua 13:7 Now therefore, divide this land as an inheritance to the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh.”

The subject then is the division of the land. Remember the prophecy said they were going to be oppressed in the land that is not theirs. In this context

we are talking about a land that *is* theirs, that was going to be divided to them.

The next question is, when did this happen? When did the land become theirs?

Joshua 14:6-7 Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal. And Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him: “You know the word which the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning you and me in Kadesh Barnea. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh Barnea to spy out the land, and I brought back word to him as it was in my heart.

That is, he brought back a truthful report. So he continues to say what occurred.

Joshua 14:10 And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, as He said, these forty-five years, ever since the Lord spoke this word to Moses while Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, here I am this day, eighty-five years old.

Caleb is now eighty-five years old, and it has been forty-five years since Moses told him to go spy out the land. Now let us find out when that was. Let us go back to the book of Numbers. What we are showing here is that the land became Israel’s forty-five years after Caleb was forty. When did that occur?

Numbers 1:1 Now the Lord spoke to Moses in the Wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle of meeting, on the first day of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying:

I told you that the date of the Exodus has already been established from other factors, and we will not go into it at this time, but it occurred in 1443 BC. So

verse 1 of chapter 1, then occurred in 1442 BC. This was the first day of the second month, in the second year, exactly thirteen months after they came out. So the date then is in the April-May period of 1442 BC.

Let us jump to Numbers 10. In the intervening chapter, the numbers of the children of Israel are given, and the census is taken.

Numbers 10:11-13 Now it came to pass on the twentieth *day* of the second month, in the second year [this is nineteen days later in the same April-May period of 1442 BC], that the cloud was taken up from above the tabernacle of the Testimony. And the children of Israel set out from the Wilderness of Sinai on their journeys [in other words, they left Mount Sinai. In fact, your Bible may even have a little sub-heading above “departure from Sinai”]; then the cloud settled down in the Wilderness of Paran. So they started out for the first time according to the command of the Lord by the hand of Moses.

Numbers 13:1-3 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel; from each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, every one a leader among them.” So Moses sent them from the Wilderness of Paran according to the command of the Lord, all of them men who *were* heads of the children of Israel.

The place that they were located in the wilderness of Paran was Kadesh Barnea. It is the same place that Caleb referred to when speaking to Joshua there in Joshua 14. Now it is this chapter 13 where Caleb and Joshua were sent out, and it is in this chapter that Caleb was forty-one years old.

Their movement from Sinai to Paran, that is, to Kadesh Barnea, which is a city, was only about one hundred and forty, or one hundred and fifty miles. Their movement from Sinai to Kadesh Barnea only took a month or so for them to make it there. So they were at Kadesh Barnea well within the year 1442 BC.

By the time you get to Joshua 14, forty-five years had gone by. They are dividing the land. So you subtract then, forty-five years from 1442 and it

brings you out to 1397 _{BC}, which is the year Israel took possession of the land, the land that was theirs, and were no longer being persecuted in the land that was not theirs. So, the four hundred years that God prophesied of in Genesis 15:13-15, begins immediately upon the death of Abraham in 1797 _{BC} and is completed in Joshua 13 there in 1397 _{BC}.

Is that not beautiful the way that works out? Practically right down to the minute. So the event that begins the four-hundred year prophesy with Abraham's death, and the event that ends it is Israel coming into possess the land under Joshua.

Let us go to Genesis 16. We have already seen through Abraham's life that for justification by faith, or you might say the receiving of God's Spirit, does not prevent us from trying to fulfill God's will on our own strength. Abraham has already tried a couple of different times. He had that venture down in Egypt, which I think was wrong for him to do, but nonetheless he did it. Here in chapter 16, we are going to see another attempt for Abraham, in which Abraham and Sarah, this time, becomes directly involved with them trying to fulfill the promises of God through their own human will, their own human energy, however you might want to put it. We might put it by works of the flesh.

Genesis 16:1-4 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, "See now, the Lord has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Abram heeded the voice of Sarai. Then Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan. [That brings us now to 1887 _{BC}, and Abraham was eight-five.] So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

Sari is involved in this with Abram, and maybe Abram wore her down. Maybe he was overly concerned about having the promised seed fulfilled.

This constant concern about this undoubtedly made her feel guilty, made her feel that she was less than a woman than what Abraham expected her to be. Maybe it led her to concoct this scheme to have a child.

Now, I know that this scheme seems like something pretty far out to you and me. However, I have it on pretty good authority from both the Bible and also from secular history where they have found records in archeology digs, that this was very widely accepted practice during the time of Abraham and even much later period. This does not mean that God approved of it. It is pretty obvious that God did not approve of it one bit. But it is something that men came up with, I do not necessarily mean the male gender, but mankind came up with, as a solution to a problem. It certainly was a solution to a problem, but as the facts show, it shows what can happen in polygamist situations.

I do want to show you a couple of scriptures on this. Let us go to Genesis 30. This occurred again, two generations later with Jacob.

Genesis 30:1-3 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, “Give me children, or else I die!” And Jacob’s anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, “Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?” So she said, “Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her.”

That is exactly what Sarah did. Again, records that have been dug up indicate that this was a very widely-accepted practice. I tried to find out what this means, “and she will bear a child on my knees.” Well, the indication is that as part of the legal process of making the child legally the mistress of the house and not the handmaiden. When the handmaiden was delivering the baby, she actually had to be sitting on the mistresses lap. It almost gives the appearance that the baby was coming from the mistress.

Now, here comes her sister Leah.

Genesis 30:9 When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife.

Same situation.

Well, their scheme was successful in the sense of Hagar becoming pregnant, and a life was about to be created. However, the rest of the chapter is going to show us that the works of the flesh accomplishes nothing. That is a statement out of the New Testament. It is very likely that this is one of the incidences where that principle was applied. So, the flesh profits nothing and when we add verse 5, we see the beginning of the unfolding of that truth.

Genesis 16:5-6 Then Sarai said to Abram, “My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. The Lord judge between you and me.” So Abram said to Sarai, “Indeed your maid is in your hand; do to her as you please.” And when Sarai dealt harshly with her, she fled from her presence.

Sarai was the first to feel the consequences of this plan. The first evil consequence is contempt that she feels undoubtedly was there from Hagar towards her.

When sin is involved it is not going to produce the right fruit. It is going to be something that is uncomfortable, maybe sometimes its exceedingly painful to deal with. She says, “My wrong.” The wrong here was the contempt, that is the contempt that was done to me, me upon you. Again, this was another, very well-established way of passing on a curse. I want to show you this by going to Genesis 27. This is the passage where Rebekah and Jacob were scheming to get the birthright and the blessing away from Isaac. So Isaac is blind and Rachal concocts this scheme where Jacob is going to make himself seem like Esau.

Genesis 27:12-13 Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be a deceiver to him; and I shall bring a curse on myself and not a blessing.” But his mother said to him, “Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my voice, and go, get them for me.”

So she is making this oath that if indeed there is a curse, rather than come on Jacob it will come on her. Now that is at what Sarah did. She passed on her curse to Abram. Let us go back to another place and this time it is God speaking.

Jeremiah 51:33-34 For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: “The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor when it is time to thresh her; yet a little while and the time of her harvest will come. Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has devoured me, he has crushed me; He has made me an empty vessel, he has swallowed me up like a monster; he has filled his stomach with my delicacies, he has spit me out. [God is speaking but He is putting the words in Jerusalem’s mouth] Let the violence done to me and my flesh be upon Babylon,” The inhabitant of Zion will say; “And my blood be upon the inhabitants of Chaldea!” Jerusalem will say.

We are beginning to see that instead of securing the fulfillment of all of their desires, which was to have a son, an heir, a seed, to have the promise of God, instead they began to reap grief, frustration, and apparently they lost faith in the process.

Genesis 16:7-14 Now the Angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. And He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from, and where are you going?” She said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.” The Angel of the Lord said to her, “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hand.” Then the Angel of the Lord said to her, “I will multiply your descendants exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude.”

And the Angel of the Lord said to her: “Behold, you are with child, and you shall bear a son. You shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has heard your affliction. He shall be a wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man’s hand against him. And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.” Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; for she said, “Have I also here seen Him who sees me?”

Therefore the well was called Beer Lahai Roi; observe, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

The way to Shur was a pretty heavily traveled road at that time, about 40 or 50 miles south of the southeastern edge or shoreline of the Mediterranean Sea, it runs between Beersheba and central Egypt. Undoubtedly she was headed on her way back to Egypt using that road to get there.

The Angel of the Lord, as you probably picked up there is really Yahweh, Melchizedek, God who was there. She recognized that. He promised her a son and innumerable multitude of seed. This at least was partly for Abraham's faith because what was in her womb was also a seed, a son of Abram. Her seed though, her child was not the promised heir. But still, she was going to be honored because he was Abraham's, that is the recipient of the promise because he was Abraham's son. Therefore came the blessing of the innumerable seed.

Ishmael means, "God hears." What it is implying is that God heard her at her time of distress. Ishmael is kind of interesting, and what God says about him is indicative of the kind of man that he turned out to be. This does not mean that he was bad, it does not mean that at all. We are just making a comparison here with one of the beasts of the desert that indicates the personality of the man.

What it says here is that "He shall be a wild man." Now what it literally says in Hebrew is "a wild ass of a man." The reference here is to a "wild ass," a donkey. It roams the desert area, somehow or another it is adapted to surviving in wilderness areas that did not support the life of many other animals.

That description is given in contrast to what Hagar was going through. She was being oppressed, that is why she fled, oppressed by Sarai, by Sarai's anger. So God says, this is a blessing to Hagar, that her son will not feel that kind of oppression. In other words, he is going to be living the kind of life that is free, independent.

So Ishmael and his descendants, the Bedouins, will be free, they will be free roaming the desert on horse, on camel, they will be a hardy, frugal people,

we might even say reveling in the beauty of the nature of that area. Surviving life in virtually every form and living in an almost constant state of feuds with one another and their neighbors. In other words, there would be a nature there that would have them, what we might call today, a kind of free spirit, roaming the desert, not wanting to become involved in city life.

Another thing that it says, “And he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.” The brethren here that God is referring to is undoubtedly the descendants of Abraham who would come through Isaac. Again, it literally says that “he will dwell before the face or the presence of,” meaning they will be neighbors of one another. So they will be in the same general area as the children of Abram, however, they will be independent of them. Interesting in the light of what is going on in the Middle East today.

Hagar recognized that she had seen God. She thought that she should die. But she did not. Here she was, still alive. Then she names the well, pretty much literally translated, “the well of being alive.” Now it seems to me, if you are a God of peace, you are a God of seeing, He is the all-seeing One, whose all seeing eye of helplessness and forsaken, meaning herself, is not hidden even in the farthest corner of the desert.

It became then, a very well recognized spot, because there she had seen God, and named the well because God had seen her.

Genesis 16:15-16 So Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore Ishmael to Abram.

He was born in 1886 BC, and it is very likely that Abram regarded Ishmael as the promised seed, until thirteen years later when God more fully revealed His purpose to Abram.

I do not think that it would be good for us to leave this episode without first going back to the book of Galatians where the apostle Paul made a very interesting application under this circumstance.

Galatians 4:21-31 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons:

the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

For it is written: “Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband.” Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

What we have here is an allegory. An allegory is a generalization, usually contained in a story, that teaches a truth about human existence, and human life. I believe it is in the King James, verse 24, says that these things are an allegory. More modern translations use, “symbolic,” “figure,” or “simple.” Now, when Paul makes use of this speaking method, he is not saying that the story is a myth. Because usually in an allegory a myth is used, but in this case it is not a myth. What he is saying is that the religious significance of what occurred here is far greater of importance for you and me than literal history. So literally it did occur, but something else occurred there that is far more important to you and me, and it is something that has to be understood. Paul was giving us the understanding by making an allegory out of what is in this case, a true story.

Galatians 4:21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law?

Paul has already stated earlier that the book of Galatians is one long argument, one side of an argument, where Paul is trying to convince these

people to break away from their reliance on the law. Paul has already stated his argument earlier in the book that the law brings witness a curse. This curse is mentioned in

Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.”

Notice he does not say under the law, he says of works of the law. Let us understand something that I do know is true. *Every law has a curse*, not just God’s law, man’s law has a curse as well. Every law has a penalty. Therefore, it is understood that a curse, that is, the penalty, has to be carried out if the law is broken. The problem with God’s law is that the curse is death.

The problem is that man cannot keep God’s law perfectly, so man is caught in an endless cycle always trying to make up for his breaking the law. You can never get away from it because you can never keep God’s law perfectly. So, if you are depending upon law, as soon as you break it, that is all she wrote. If you pay the penalty, you are dead.

Now God had a way of reminding the people they were breaking the law through the sacrificial law. So they went through the ritual, but as we find in Hebrews 10, it’s impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to forgive sin. It was never God’s intent for the blood of bulls and goats to forgive a human sin. That would be animal life for the life of a man, a very poor comparison. It could never do it.

So if a person tries to live up to the law, he is caught in an endless cycle, because he is always going to fall short. So here in Galatians 4:21, Paul asked a question. “Do you hear [do you comprehend, do you understand] what the law says?” Now, law here means the first five books, the Torah. It does not mean legislation. The reason I know that is because what Paul just referred to in the allegory was taken from Genesis 16. That’s part of the law. He is not talking about legislation, he is talking about the structure that is

contained in the first five books. So, then he asks the question, “Do you understand what it says in Genesis 16?” This is just a re-phrase of what he said.

It is very likely that those who Paul was writing against had used Abraham as a very large part of their argument. He was their example. The Jews used descent from Abraham as a large part of their claim on God’s blessing and promises.

I want to point this out because Jesus ran into it and Paul ran into it, John the Baptist ran into it. We are going to pick the episode first of all from John the Baptist.

Matthew 3:9 “and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.”

They were putting a great deal of alliance on their descendants from Abraham. Now in John 8, Jesus ran into it, the same principle.

John 8:37-39 “I know that you are Abraham’s descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father. They answered and said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” Jesus said to them, “If you were Abraham’s children, you would do the works of Abraham.”

Abraham kept God’s law. Genesis 26 shows this beyond a shadow of a doubt. “The commandments, the statutes, and My law,” God said. Abraham kept it, but his approach to law did not produce the same works as the Jews. We just read it. Jesus said if you were Abraham’s children you would not be doing the things you are doing, you would be doing what Abraham did. Abraham, who lived by faith, undoubtedly believed in keeping the law, but his approach to law was entirely different from the approach of the Jews, both Jesus and Paul says.

Romans 4:1-3 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.”

We began tonight’s Bible study with that, and then Genesis 15. Continuing on,

Romans 4:4-8 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”

Abraham kept God’s law, but it obvious from Romans 4 that he did not trust in his keeping of God’s law as a means of salvation. Now if he did receive salvation through this method of keeping the law, then as Paul says, salvation was earned, and (now here comes the important part), this subtly puts God and man on the same level and determines the nature of the relationship between God and man. Now salvation is something earned, it is owed to the man.

Brethren, that is not good for man’s pride. It is not good for producing God’s qualities in a son of God. In fact, it presents another impossibility, because before the very qualities God wants in His children can be produced, it requires an attitude of acceptance and dependence on God through faith that God will supply his needs. If the person is earning it by works, what does he need God for?

But, you see, man is caught in a trap because he cannot keep the law. What this presents is the need that man cannot supply of himself because he is already soiled, he is filthy, he is defiled, and is destined for death because of

sin. Even if he is forgiven, and once again goes back to his dependence on law, he sins again and finds himself in the same position over and over and over again. He is in an endless cycle of bondage. He works to earn something that is impossible to earn. He cannot work himself into being a God being.

I hope that is clear to you and me. It was not clear to the Jews. They stumbled over this. A person who has knowledge of this, and humbly presents himself to God to be used as God wills and to be provided for as God provides, that is, grace through faith, is then putting himself in position in which the nature of that relationship is going to be determined. If it is by works, the nature of the relationship is determined that God and man are virtually equal. It is essentially an employer and employee relationship.

But if the man owes something to God, that is much different. If a man recognizes that he owes something to God, and he humbly submits himself to that God because he recognizes the only way to have what it is that he wants is through his submission, now we are beginning to come to a reality that is going to change that relationship.

What happens is that God Himself is set free to give that person his gifts because He knows that He is dealing with someone of a humble mind and those gifts are going to be rightly used. They are going to be rightly used towards entrance into His Kingdom. The person then is also free to receive the gifts and enjoy their use and all their benefits without being destroyed through vanity, because he recognizes that these are things that are given, they are not things that are earned.

Now godly righteousness, godly character, godly virtues, and godly love will follow that kind of relationship.

You have read what it says in Ezekiel 28 about Lucifer, about how he was the most gifted of any being God ever created. But Lucifer could not handle the gift of God because the nature of their relationship was determined by Lucifer's attitude of God. What does it say in Isaiah 14? It says, "I am going to mount up on the sides of the north and I shall be god." Lucifer's attitude would determine what the nature of their relationship was, "I deserve more and better, I have earned it." That is why salvation cannot be of works. That

destroys the man, because all it does is feed his vanity. It puts man and God at the same level. That is the way Lucifer viewed their relationship. He was god, he was on the same level as God. So the nature of our relationship with God is determined by our attitude toward Him.

Now God is a constant factor, He always loves, He never changes. He is a constant factor. Salvation therefore is by grace through faith. Grace comes, it is given to those who recognize their position before God and act accordingly by faith. Now, faith does not negate law keeping, or we might say, faith does not negate works, but rather faith puts them in its proper position. It enables a person to live by faith in all aspects of life and not just in regard to salvation. Salvation comes at the end and salvation will come because the nature of the relationship is correct.

Luke 17:5-10 And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” So the Lord said, “If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you. And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? But will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink’? Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’ ”

What Jesus is showing here is the servants did the things commanded, or you might say, required, they did their duty, but that was not enough. Just like law keeping is not enough. Why is it not enough? Well, He just told you. If salvation comes by works, or salvation comes by keeping the law, then we have *earned* it. If we have earned it, we have an employer/employee relationship with God and we are on the same level as He is. That is not good for a man. It sets up a situation that is impossible to produce what God wants to be produced with us.

So Jesus plainly showed here that there must be something over and above law keeping, but law keeping is required. Understand this, *law keeping does not produce righteousness the righteousness of God*. Law keeping *maintains* the relationship. Jesus is showing here there must be something over and above law keeping that is different. What is needed that is over and above law keeping is *grace*. Grace is the gift. It is given by order of the Giver. It is given in order to provide a relationship. If it were not for God's grace, if He did not freely offer the forgiveness of sin, we would be forever separated from Him.

We could never have the righteousness to enable us to walk with Him, to talk with Him, to being as perfect as Him. So it is something that He extends to us—a gift—even though in actual fact, based upon our works, we do not deserve to be there. So without the grace that is given the relationship is impossible.

What we have to make sure of is that the nature of that relationship is always kept right. We are not the equal of God, we are only there at His bidding. We are there in His presence because it is something that He has given to us, extended to us, so that a relationship would be possible, and thus make it possible for Him working through us and produce His righteousness in us.

Grace is given in order to establish a relationship that then enables God to give other gifts of His Spirit, one of which is faith, the kind of faith that is required for salvation—Christ's faith. It is something that is given on the basis of the relationship. It is something that is given, not something that is earned.

Romans 4:16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed . . .

God is a constant factor, God always loves us. If salvation depended upon our law keeping, nobody would make it. We would always be in bondage to death. It has to be by grace.

Romans 4:16 . . . not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.

That is, those who are Abraham's children by the Spirit.

Galatians 4:22-23 For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise.

Paul is saying there is too many differences between the sons. One is that they were born of different women, one free, the other a slave. The second was the manner of their conception. Ishmael's was entirely natural, Isaac was entirely by a miracle.

Romans 4:19 And not being weak in faith, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb.

Paul is there determining that Abraham was no longer producing live sperm, and Sarah had long ago quit producing eggs. It was totally impossible for them to produce a son by natural means. We know that just thirteen years before when Ishmael was born that Abraham was still producing live sperm. But in that intervening thirteen years that God had waited, it reached a point where he was not producing live sperm, but he had to wait and wait, and God waited till Abraham's sperm was dead. And then, Sarah conceived.

There was no doubt that what was being worked out here was a miracle that was from God. It was by grace; it was not by Abraham's works. The seed, the promised fulfillment began as the result of a miracle.

Galatians 4:24-26 . . .which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.

Here Paul continues to show the basic distinctions, in more complete spiritual terms, using the historical accounts as an allegory. The key to understanding this a little bit better is to understand the word translated here, “corresponds.” It is a Greek word meaning, “in the same column,” as in the alphabet, or “as soldiers at attention.” So what he is saying is he is giving you two things that are opposites, or two separate things that are opposites. One in this column, and one in this column.

So what do we have? Hagar, who is the bond woman, and on the other side we have Sarah the free woman. Under Hagar we have Ishmael from a natural birth, and we have Isaac on the other side, from a supernatural birth. We have the Old Covenant on one side, and we have the New Covenant on the other. We have earthly Jerusalem on one side, and we have heavenly Jerusalem on the other. We have the church in the wilderness, which eventually became Judaism, on one side, we have Christianity on the other.

What Paul is saying here is that we have two entirely different religions, two different ways of life. Hagar displayed the ways of the Old Covenant enacted at Sinai with Ishmael representing all the church members of the congregations of Israel of that period, with their center at the earthly Jerusalem. Sarah, the free woman, represents the New Covenant, which was brought into being through Christ’s blood. You can read that in Luke 22:30, where He said, “Drink this cup, which is the new covenant in my blood.” So it represents the New Covenant, brought into being through the sacrifice of Christ. So Isaac then, stands for all those who become part of the church, centered in the heavenly Jerusalem, but on earth as all of us prepare for the new order to come.

Paul is saying that on a superficial level Isaac and Ishmael were alike in that they were both sons of Abraham. But on a fundamental and much more important level, they were entirely different. What is important to Paul is, who was their mother. They had the same father, but what was important was the mother.

Now spiritually, if we were begotten by merely physical means, that is, the works of the flesh, in keeping every one of the Ten Commandments as the Pharisees did, and they had it right, Jesus said they had a righteousness, well

then, we are still in bondage. But if our mother is Sarah, Jerusalem above, then begettal was by miracle, by God's calling, entirely and completely by God's actions. We had nothing to do with it except we were here. And He decided to choose us as one who would receive the benefit of His grace and be invited into a relationship with Him, through which His righteousness would be put into us, and we would be born into the Family of God. Completely and totally apart from anything that we had done. We have not earned one iota, one tiny bit of the calling of God and the begettal by God.

So what do we have to brag of before God? See, it sets the stage so that we can humbly submit to God. If it is on the basis of our work, we will not submit to God, it is impossible. It had to be done this way. If it is on the basis of what we have done, God owes us something and we know it.

Brethren, the only way that God can save us [unclear] . . . that His mind, His heart, His character, His love, His joy, His peace will be written in us to do it this way. We have to admit it is working [unclear] . . .

Galatians 4:27 For it is written: "Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband."

This is a quote from Isaiah 54:1. Really what it is, when you see it in context, is a prophecy of the restoration of Jerusalem. What it says in its context is that eventually Jerusalem will be lifted to a glory far exceeding anything that she ever enjoyed in the past, and that she will have countless children, awesome population. What Paul is applying it to here is the church. The church he says is small and despised. But God, he is saying, will treat that faithful remnant with lovingkindness by giving them an inheritance of grace, peace, and prosperity that will eventually consist of an innumerable multitude.

Galatians 4:28 Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise.

All Christians are like Isaac, they had spiritual, supernatural begettal, therefore Paul is saying that our experiences will be similar to Isaac. Not Ishmael, but Isaac.

Galatians 4:29 But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now.

He is saying then that the church has to endure persecution from our natural brother, that is, the ones who are out in the world. Usually these natural brothers are going to be those who are more religious, but do not have the truth. I think you understand that these who were enemies against Paul were those religious people, and they are going to be ours as well.

Galatians 4:30 Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.”

What he is saying here is that the second step of this being like Isaac, is that Christians must recognize the total incompatibility of the two different ways. They cannot be [unclear]. In a more narrow application, he is saying that those who believe this way should be disfellowshipped from the church. Now individuals then, he is saying that this concept that the people from the book of Galatians were believing has to be rejected so that it does not grow within yourself. You get to the place where you are counting on your works [unclear]. It does not work.

Galatians 4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

So Paul concludes his argument by saying we should see clearly the direction we should go.

One of the things that my eye picks up here is that Paul used some of the very same scriptures that the Jews do to support *their* argument. He uses the same scriptures the Jews used, and he turned them right around and shows them the true application.

The one that really caught my eye was “cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the

freewoman.” Do you know what the Jews used that scripture for back in the Old Testament? To them that was authority that they could not associate with Gentiles.

What Paul used it for was to say that God was more concerned about spiritual affinity, that is, descendance from Abraham and Sarah in a spiritual way rather than descendance from them in a physical way. The true sons of God are those who are begotten by the same Spirit as Abraham, the Spirit of God.

Righteousness comes as a gift of God. It is something that is given. It is not something that is earned through our keeping of the commandments. It is something that is required of us because it maintains the relationship. Remember how Paul says in Romans 2:13 that only those who keep the law will be justified.

Now wives, husbands, if you do not agree with one another in your family relationship, and you disobeyed one another, did not submit to one another, do you think that you could have a relationship? That is the kind of thing that leads to divorce. It is the same thing with God. Obeying His commands maintains the relationship; however, it does not produce righteousness. That comes as a gift by God’s Spirit.