

Galatians: Freedom through Christ – Part 8

Children of Promise – Galatians 4:21-31

Crosspoint – Dave Spooner – November 9, 2025

Introduction

- This morning, we are going to continue our series in the book of Galatians and return to chapter four, starting with verse twenty-one. In order to understand and apply today's passage, you need to have some background information. This passage references Abraham, his sons, and their mothers as examples of two categories of people and their relationship to God. Their full story is contained in Genesis 12-25. I would encourage you to read it or read it again at some point, and if you really want to dive deep, I did a 13-part series on these chapters in the winter of 2022. It can find them on our website <https://www.crosspointrockford.com/sermon-archives/>
- The relevant information you need for today is this. God made a promise to a guy named Abram(ham) to make him into a great nation, that He would be their God and they would be His people, and that all the nations would be blessed through him. Abraham had a wife named Sarai(h), and they were not able to conceive children, even though God had promised a child to them.
- Sarah had a slave named Hagar, and they decided to have a child through her. Hagar conceived a son named Ishmael. However, God came through on His promise to Abraham and Sarah, and by God's power, Sarah conceived a son named Isaac.
- Paul, in our passage for today, uses this story as an allegory to explain and illustrate the difference between trying to earn your place in the family of God by your own strength and works versus being a true child of God through being born into His family by His promise and power. The goal of this message is for you to walk in the joy of the freedom of grace as a true child of God and not to be enslaved by the lie that you must earn your place in the family of God. Knowing this should give you confidence and security in your salvation and freedom and power to live according to the Spirit's leading.
- Please turn in your Bibles to Galatians 4:21 (page 1003). We are going to read this passage in its entirety and then talk it through so we can hopefully have a clear understanding and grasp of what it means and says.

Galatians 4:21-31 (NIV)

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. 23 His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

24 These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. 25 Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written:

“Be glad, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.”

28 Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. 29 At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. 30 But what does Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.” 31 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

- Okay, that is a lot to take in and keep straight. To help us, I have made a chart that categorizes and compares the two groups: those who are trying to earn their way into the family of God and those who are born into it.

Comparison Chart: The Slave Woman and the Free Woman

Category	Hagar – The Slave Woman	Sarah – The Free Woman
Represents	The Old Covenant (Law)	The New Covenant (Grace)
Covenant Location	Mount Sinai (Earthly Jerusalem)	The Jerusalem Above (Zion Heavenly City)
Relationship to Abraham	Slave woman (concubine)	Free woman (wife)
Son’s Name	Ishmael	Isaac
Birth	According to the flesh (human effort)	According to the promise (divine power)
Method	By human planning and impatience	By God’s supernatural fulfillment
Symbolizes	Works, bondage, self-effort, legalism	Faith, freedom, grace, promise
Produces	Slavery (bondage to the law and sin)	Freedom (life in the Spirit)
City Connection	“The present Jerusalem” (earthly, bound)	“The Jerusalem above” (heavenly, free)
Children	Born into slavery (those under the law)	Children of promise (those in Christ)
Spiritual Status	Under bondage	Free in Christ
Outcome	Cast out (no inheritance with the free)	Heir of the promise (full inheritance)
Modern Equivalent	Legalism (trying to earn God’s favor)	Grace (trusting God’s finished work)

Summary Truth

- *Hagar and Ishmael = Human effort, law, and slavery*
- *Sarah and Isaac = Divine promise, grace, and freedom*

**“So then, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.”
— Galatians 4:31**

- Paul contrasts the way of law, earning your way into the family of God, and the way of faith, trusting in God's finished work. Which leads us to our two main points: you cannot earn your way into the family of God; you must be born into the family of God.

You Cannot Earn Your Way into the Family of God

- “You who want to be under the law” (v. 21) – why would anyone want this? My guess is that they would rather rely on their own merit and strength than trust in the promise and grace of God. This way, they are in control rather than trusting God, who is truly in control. At the root of this is pride that says, “I am good enough,” versus humility that says, “I am not good enough,” and, “I must seek the grace and mercy of God.”
- If you try to earn your way into God's family, then you have to do so by perfectly obeying the law of God. No one can do this because we do not have what it takes to do so. We don't have this power within us because we are born with a sin nature; we are rebels at heart.
- If we try to do this in our own strength, we are from the lineage of the slave woman. We are Ishmael; no divine intervention needed, we can do it on our own. This is what you can do in your own power and strength—you do not need faith, and you do not need the Spirit. And you will not have an inheritance because you are not in the family.
- But there is one and only one who could and has done this, Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God. He gave us a New Covenant by taking our place under the law and perfectly fulfilling it. He gave us His grace and His Spirit so that we can become children of God, being “born again” (John 3:3-8), adopted into the family (Gal 4:1-5).

You Must Be Born into the Family of God

- No person can become a child of God without a miracle of God. Every time someone is “born again,” a miracle of God has happened. Human effort does not produce God's children. Faith in God's promise produces God's children by the power of His Spirit. God gives us a new heart by His Spirit when we put our faith in Christ and His promise of forgiveness of sin and eternal life (see Ezek 18:31; 36:26-27; 1 Pet 1:3-5; 1:23-25).
- We cannot earn this; we must come to God in humility, asking for His grace and forgiveness given to us through Christ, making us children of the promise and rightful children of God. So don't try to earn your way into God's family by following the rules of the law (the Old Testament Torah). We are children of God because of our faith in Jesus—nothing more. This is called grace.

Conclusion

- Paul's final words drive it home: “We are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman” (v. 31). That means:
 - You are free from guilt—because Christ has forgiven you.
 - You are free from fear—because you are secure in His love.
 - You are free from striving—because the work is finished.
- The gospel is not “try harder.” It's “trust deeper.” You don't achieve God's love; you receive it. You don't earn freedom; you live from it. You are not a slave trying to prove your worth; you are a child of promise living in grace.
- Practical Applications

- *Put your faith in Christ*—Put down your pride, and come to Him in humility and repentance. Ask for His grace, and believe in His promise of new life. Receive His Spirit and follow Christ.
- *Stop striving*—Start resting. Take time this week to sit quietly before God and thank Him for what He’s already done, rather than asking for what you need to earn.
- *Cast out the old ways*—Identify one area where you’re still trying to earn God’s favor (performance, comparison, guilt) and surrender it to Him.
- *Walk in the Spirit*—Freedom isn’t the absence of rules; it’s the presence of the Spirit. Ask daily, “Holy Spirit, lead me today as a child of promise.”

“For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” — Galatians 5:1

Our prayer team is available to pray with you after the service, near the “prayer” sign at the front of the sanctuary, and also in the prayer room, located next to the offices.

Also, you can send your prayer request to prayer@crosspointrockford.com

Questions for Growth Groups

1. What stood out to you most from this passage? How did Paul’s use of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar help you understand the difference between living by law and living by grace?
2. Why do you think people are often more comfortable trying to earn God’s approval than resting in His promise? What does this reveal about human pride and control?
3. Paul says we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman (v. 31). What does that mean practically for your daily walk with God?
4. In what ways do you sometimes slip back into a “slave mindset”? (Examples: guilt, performance, comparison, fear of failure.) How can the truth of the gospel set you free from that?
5. What does it mean to be “born of the Spirit” and not of the flesh (vv. 28–29)? How do you see the Spirit producing new life or change in you?
6. Paul urges believers to “cast out the slave woman and her son.” What might that look like for us today? What old habits, thoughts, or patterns need to be removed so grace can reign fully?
7. How can living as a “child of promise” impact the way you approach worship, relationships, and service this week? What would it look like for our church to live in the freedom of grace together?