



2016: Week 23

Sunday, June 5th 2016

"Which Son Are You?"

Galatians 4:22-23

²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. ²³But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise." (NASB).

On Sunday, we continued our study as a church family through Paul's letter to the Galatians. Within the particular passage this week, we find Paul (as he often does) referring back to Old Testament individuals and situations. Paul's method of utilizing Old Testament parallels helps him better explain spiritual truths to those within his immediate context. In this instance, Paul referenced Abraham's two well-known sons, Isaac and Ishmael, so that the Galatians might better understand the contrast between being in bondage and being in freedom.

1. READ Galatians 4:19-31

- When Paul said the "son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh" (v.23a)...
 - A) Which son was he talking about?
 - B) How was he born "according to the flesh"?
 - C) How might Ishmael be linked with the concept of "self effort"?

- When Paul said "the son by the free woman (was born) through the promise" (v.23b)...
 - A) Which son was he talking about?
 - B) How was he born "through the promise"?
 - C) How might Isaac be related with the concept of "God's effort"?

2. In the case of Ishmael, Sarah and Abraham "took matters into their own hands" by using Hagar to provide them a son. Hagar gave Abraham a son, but this was not what God had in mind. God wanted to give Abraham a son through Sarah. We don't know all the thoughts running through their minds, but how might you explain Abraham and Sarah's actions *if* they were thinking the following thoughts:

"The end justifies the means" ?

"God helps those who help themselves" ?

"God doesn't want me sitting around here doing nothing. I need to do something!" ?

"This is taking too long, and I'm tired of waiting!" ?

"I don't understand God's plan, but I know how to do it 'my way'" ?

3. How might believing the previous statements ("the end justifies the means", etc.) be harmful to our spiritual growth? Why is a "self effort" mentality so prevalent in our culture (and so many other cultures too)?

4. Even as Christians, we can very easily drift towards a dangerous "self-effort" mentality in regards to both our justification and to our sanctification. (For justification, think "getting saved"; For sanctification, think "growing spiritually")

- A) Why do we do this?
- B) What can we do to prevent developing a "self-effort" mentality?

FAMILY PRAYER: If you are a believer, thank the Lord that He has made possible your salvation through *His own effort*. Ask the Lord to help you live like an Isaac, not an Ishmael.