

Sarah & Hagar

Gen. 16

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I. Text: Genesis 16:1-16

1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. . .

II. The Breakdown in Their Faith

What went wrong in Abraham and Sarah's faith that led them into this muddle situation? The major breakdown in their faith was their _____. It appears they were trusting in God for the promised seed, but when the way proved difficult and when the promise was delayed, they started fishing around for another idea; in effect saying, "How can we bring about the promise? Because this way doesn't seem to be working for us."

As a result of this impatience, Abraham and Sarah pursued the promise by merely _____ means. They traded patience for ingenuity and got to work. But God wanted to do something _____, not *clever*. The whole point of the promise was for Abraham and Sarah to trust God to do what they couldn't do on their own. But they thought they would help God out, and make it easier for Him to bring about His promise.

In the end, for all their effort and ingenuity, they only made their way _____ and caused more problems than they solved. Rather than patiently waiting for the Lord to grow their family and make them a blessing to others, the result of this drama was exactly that: *drama*. The fruit of it all was strife, with Sarah set on edge against Abraham and against Hagar; Abraham having to arbitrate between his spurned wife and the mother of his child; Hagar deciding to flee. God's promise was glorious and good, yet by pursuing it this way they complicated it. They traded a glorious promise for something dull and prickly.

III. Ishmael: A Wild Donkey of a Man

By taking this route, they also complicated their _____ and made it harder for their descendants. Ishmael was not going to be a blessing to the promised Abrahamic line. How his mother treated Sarah was how he would treat Isaac, and how his descendants would treat Isaac's descendants. By attempting to bring about the promise by merely human means, they only brought bad-blood into the path of the promise.

- While the Lord said that Hagar's descendants will be multiplied exceedingly, so that they shall not be counted for multitude (v. 10), this was not going to be a good thing for the people of Israel. On the one hand, this language continues the promise given to Abraham. But what will her son be *like*? All the nations of the earth shall be _____ in Abraham's offspring, but Ishmael shall be "a wild man [*lit.* a wild donkey of a 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" (v. 12). Ishmael and the Ishmaelites will not be a pleasant people. They'll be numerous, but their sword will be against everyone else.

IV. Our Temptation to Become Impatient

Abraham and Sarah were not the first, let alone the last, to become impatient with the promises of God. It is a real temptation for us, too, to want to hasten God's hand, to rush His blessings, but we must learn from the example of Abraham and Sarah that this is the way to _____ and contentions.

The Lord sets out the way of His promise in a straight path before your feet, and the journey's tough. It's long. It requires patience and long-suffering. And what happens as we tread down this road? We become impatient, and start thinking of ways to bring about the blessing of God—ways, we say to ourself, that will actually *work*. But they're human ways. They are Hagar ways. They are not the way of the promise, but of man, which are ways that do not end well.

V. The Allegory of Sarah & Hagar (Gal. 4:22-26)

What Paul teaches us in this passage is that Abraham and Sarah pursued the blessing of the Lord by human means, by their own effort, according to the flesh, and they did not get blessing on that route. Instead, they got the works of the _____. They got contentions and hatred and outbursts of wrath and selfish ambition and envy and so on and so forth. They got sin. They pursued the blessing of the Lord—a good thing—but they did it _____, and ended up reaping corruption.

In contrast to this, Paul speaks about the son of the promise. The son born of the free-woman is _____, he says. And by this he indicates that what Abraham and Sarah attained as they (after this incident with Hagar) chose to patiently wait in the way of the Lord—they obtained *laughter*, that is, they obtained *Isaac*. They reaped life and joy, life from death, joy from sorrow, a child from barrenness.

VI. The Way of the Promise & the Way of the Flesh

When we choose to walk by faith, trusting in God to bring about His promises, we find freedom and life. That's because the way of the promise is _____. It frees us to love others, frees us to rejoice, frees us to be self-controlled and calm and *happy*. But, on the other hand, when we try to _____ at the blessing of God, we start to get desperate, and like Sarah and Abraham, we come up with stupid ideas. But these routes only lead to more trouble for us and for our kids after us.

VII. Conclusion

Holy Scripture teaches us to view the Christian life through certain analogies and metaphors that demand of us patience. The Christian life is like sowing and _____ (Gal. 6:8-9); the kingdom of heaven is like _____ working its way through all the dough (Matt. 13:33); it's building a _____ (Lk. 14:28); it's like running a long _____ (2 Tim. 4:7). The kingdom of heaven is not a vending machine. It isn't like Netflix, press the button and the movie starts. It isn't ten easy steps to the blessing of the Lord. It's slow and steady. It is Abraham and Sarah sojourning in a foreign land, looking for the blessing of children. And it requires of us a patience that joyfully rests in the Lord. As we tread down this path, the Lord will meet us with His promised blessings—with blessings in good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For God is a God who works for those who wait for Him (Isa. 64:4).