

TWO WAYS TO LIVE (vv. 28-31)

It is one thing to be children of promise, and another thing to live as children of promise. Paul leaves us with a warning and a plea. The warning is that we can expect opposition from those who do not understand our freedom in Christ. The plea is for us to take decisive action against anything and everything that threatens our freedom in Christ.

VERSES 28-31 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.

1. What kind of persecution might we expect from those who do not understand the freedom of the gospel?
2. What did of persecution might we expect from those who abuse the freedom of the gospel?
3. What are some things in your life that threaten your full enjoyment of freedom in Christ?
4. What are some practical things you can do to preserve and protect that freedom?



360 DISCUSSION 05.28.17

CHILDREN OF PROMISE

GALATIANS 4:21-31



The sad truth is that even after the emancipation proclamation was signed, many of those who lived under the tyranny of slavery, slowly found their way back to the plantation. They offered themselves as indentured servants to the families that once bought and sold them as cattle. While they were free by proclamation, they continued to live as slaves. It was the only life they knew.

Most of us are far more comfortable with slavery, than freedom. Our religious routines and worldly ambitions are comfortable. The gospel can be scary.

The Apostle Paul's greatest fear was that someone would taste the freedom of the gospel and settle for something less—that they could be redeemed by the precious blood of Christ and adopted into God's family, yet continue to live in bondage.

In Galatians 4:21-31, he retells a story from the life of Abraham that sets the freedom of the gospel and bondage to sin and the Law in sharp relief.

TWO SONS (vv. 21-23)

The story of Abraham serves as a cautionary tale. God promised Abraham a son. After ten long years, Abraham and Sarah were still childless. In a moment of desperation, they took matters into their own hands. Sarah gave her handmaid to Abraham, and Abraham fathered a child through her. While the child initially seemed like an answer to prayer, Sarah soon regretted the decision. The child and his mother became a thorn in Abraham and Sarah's side that persists to this day. There are few hatreds as bitter as the hatred between the family lines of Ishmael and Isaac.

Fourteen years later, twenty five years after the initial promise, when Sarah was well beyond any reasonable hope of having children, Abraham and Sarah conceived and gave birth to Isaac. God not only proved himself to be a God who keeps his word, but a God who is powerful enough to keep his word against all odds.

Paul uses the two sons as an illustration of those born into the freedom of the gospel and those who continue to labor under the impossible demands of the law.

VERSES 21-23 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.

1. What are some of the differences Paul highlights between Abraham's two sons?
2. One translation renders the phrase "according to the flesh," "by human effort." How would you describe the difference between what we can accomplish on our own, and what God can accomplish in and through us?
3. What happens when we settle for our best rather than God's best?
4. What are some of the situations where you are most likely to be impatient with God?
5. What usually happens when we become impatient with God?
6. Why do you think God often waits until we have exhausted our own resources, before he comes through with his own?

TWO COVENANTS (vv.24-27)

Paul's opponents argued that they were the true sons of Abraham because they were born in the line of Isaac, they accepted circumcision as a sign of the covenant, and they were scrupulous law-keepers. In a bold counter move, Paul tells them that they more closely resemble the sons and daughters of Hagar than the sons and daughters of Sarah.

He also tells them that the Mountain they are so fond of, and the city they are so fond of are illustrations of the same kind of slavery.

Paul plays on the promise that Jerusalem herself will be renewed at the end of the age. Jerusalem like Sarah, in spite of barrenness, would give birth to children of promise. Paul tells the Galatian believers that they are already citizens of the Jerusalem that is to come.

VERSES 24-27 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."

1. The Bible is on many levels a story of unlikely births. Isaac's birth to Sarah was an unlikely birth. Samuel's birth to Hannah was an unlikely birth. John's birth to Elizabeth was an unlikely birth. And of course, Jesus' birth to Mary was an unlikely birth. In what ways is our birth into Christ an unlikely birth?
2. The Scripture speaks of the coming of the New Jerusalem as both a present reality and a future event.
 - a. What are some ways we currently experience the benefits of being citizens of the New Jerusalem?
 - b. What are the benefits that we will not experience until God establishes his full and final rule on earth?
3. How does God bring fruitfulness out of our barrenness?



360 BIBLE STUDIES 05.28.17

PAUL'S STUDY NOTES | GALATIANS 4:21-31

ESSENCE OF THE TEXT: Paul turns the table on his opponents by arguing those who want to be under the law to the son born to Abraham according to the flesh through Hagar, and those who respond to the gospel to the son born to Abraham according to promise by the power of the Spirit through Sarah.

ANALYTICAL OUTLINE

I. TWO SONS (vv. 21-23)

- A. ²¹Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says?
- B. ²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman.
 - 1. ²³His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh,
 - 2. but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

II. TWO COVENANTS (vv. 24-27)

- A. ²⁴These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants.
- B. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves:
 - 1. This is Hagar.
 - 2. ²⁵Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children.
- C. ²⁶But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷For it is written:
 - 1. Be glad, barren woman, you who never bore a child; shout for joy and cry aloud, you who were never in labor;
 - 2. because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband.”

III. TWO TYPES OF CHILDREN (vv. 28-31)

- A. ²⁸Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise.
 - 1. ²⁹At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now.

2. 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.”

B. ³¹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

COMMENTARY

Paul returns to the argument about what it means to be the “children of Abraham” that was so important in 3:7–29 (Dunn 1993a: 246). Now, however, the issue is taken a step further as Paul distinguishes two lines of descent from Abraham, one stemming from the “slave woman” Hagar and the other from the “free woman” Sarah. The Galatians, Paul argues, belong to this second line of descent, children of Spirit, born through the promise, just as Isaac was. Paul bases this argument on Scripture, citing the story of Sarah and Hagar in Gen. 16–21 (cf. γέγραπται [it is written] in v. 22) and Isaiah’s prophecy (54:1) about the reversal of fortunes experienced by a barren woman in verse 27 (γέγραπται again). MOO

The Hagar-Sarah allegory begins with the “verb of saying” λέγετέ μοι, “tell me” (v 21), and it includes two uses of the vocative: ὑμεῖς δέ ἀδελφοί, “now you, brothers” (v 28), and διό, ἀδελφοί, “therefore, brothers” (v 31). Its stress is on the four imperatives cited from two biblical passages: “be glad,” “break forth,” “cry aloud” (v 27, quoting Isa 54:1), and, in particular, “cast out the slave woman and her son” (v 30, quoting Gen 21:10). LONGENECKER

Paul sets out in allegorical fashion two rather traditional lines of contrast: the line of Hagar and Ishmael, which has to do with slavery and the natural process of procreation, and the line of Sarah and Isaac, which has to do with freedom and promise. But Paul’s contemporization of the Hagar-Sarah story does not stop with these contrasts. He makes matters even more explicit by introducing two further dualities (one incomplete): Mount Sinai and the present city of Jerusalem in contrast to “the Jerusalem that is above” (with Mount Zion being understood as equivalent but not expressed). LONGENECKER

²¹ 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.

In an obvious play on words, Paul then challenges the Galatians, who want to be “under the law,” to “hear the Law.” MOO

The verb ἀκούω (akouō, hear) probably has the sense of the Hebrew שָׁמַע (šāma‘, hear), used in conjunction with the law: not just “hearing” or “listening” but also “attentive hearing,” a “listening that leads to understanding and obedience” (Mussner 1988: 317). Paul wants the Galatians to “learn” what the Law is saying. MOO

Paul sets out in allegorical fashion two rather traditional lines of contrast: the line of Hagar and Ishmael, which has to do with slavery and the natural process of procreation, and the line of Sarah and Isaac, which has to do with freedom and promise. But Paul’s contemporization of the Hagar-Sarah story does not stop with these contrasts. He makes matters even more explicit by introducing two further dualities (one incomplete): Mount Sinai and the present city of Jerusalem in contrast to “the Jerusalem that is above” (with Mount Zion being understood as equivalent but not expressed). LONGENECKER

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.

In contrast, then, κατὰ σάρκα draws attention to the strictly human agency that led to the birth of Ishmael. In this case, not only was there no divine promise or any indication of special divine intervention; but the birth also was the result of the (overly hasty?) decision of Abraham and Sarah to seek an heir by marrying Abraham to their female slave (Gen. 16; 17:18). MOO

The word σάρξ (sarx, flesh) is one of the most difficult words to understand in Paul, but it generally connotes a sense of “strictly/narrowly human.” Sarx does not necessarily have an explicitly negative connotation, but by virtue of its generally implicit contrast with Spirit or something of the sort, it tends to take on the nuance of at least a limited or restricted perspective. Here, therefore, the idea may be captured well by TNIV: “as the result of human effort. MOO

By sleeping with Hagar, Abraham was choosing to rely on his own capabilities. He was opting to “work” and gain his son. He was acting in faith: but the faith he had was in himself, as his own “savior”. KELLER

Abraham did not rely on God’s grace through His supernatural action in history but rather on his own ability. When we fail to rest in God and instead seek to be our own savior, the result is havoc and disintegration—spiritually, psychologically, and relationally. KELLER

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.

As we noted in commenting on 3:10–14, C. K. Barrett has proposed that Paul’s exegetical practices throughout Galatians “can be best explained if we may suppose that he is taking up passages that had been used by his opponents, correcting their exegesis, and showing that their Old Testament prooftexts were on his side rather than on theirs”. In line with such a proposal, Barrett’s further point here is apropos: “His [Paul’s] so-called allegorical treatment of Abraham and the two women was evoked not by a personal love of fantastic exegesis but by a reasoned case which it was necessary that he should answer”. LONGENECKER

By introducing his reference to this Mount Sinai covenant with a μὲν, he suggests that he intends to continue his sentence with a corresponding δέ clause in which he would identify this covenant. But his audacious claim that Hagar represents this Mount Sinai covenant derails him, and he never returns to complete the comparison. How should we fill in this blank? With a glance at 2 Cor. 3, many interpreters think that Paul would have contrasted the Mount Sinai covenant with the “new covenant” (Lincoln 1981: 16; Rohde 1989: 195; R. Longenecker 1990: 21; J. Meyer 2009: 115–37). However, within the argument of Galatians, it is more likely that Paul would be thinking of the Abrahamic covenant. MOO

The rest of the paragraph, with its references to the two sons of Abraham, dueling covenants, and the “flesh/Spirit” contrast, suggests that Paul is engaged in a more fundamental contrast of two readings of salvation history, one focusing on the law as the continuing qualification for the people of God, and the other focusing on the law-free gospel. Certainly this contrast is at the heart of Paul’s earlier argument (3:15–4:7). The “present” Jerusalem, then, is Paul’s way of speaking of the Judaism of his day, a Judaism that continues to rely on the law and ignore or not give adequate place to Christ (Harmon 2010: 175). The language of Jerusalem suggests that he is already influenced by the Isa. 54:1 text that he will cite in verse 27, a text that presumes the reality of Israel’s exile for its sin and disobedience to the law (see esp. Starling 2011: 23–60). MOO

The final clause in verse 25 supplies a missing element in Paul’s logic. How can he identify Hagar with Sinai (vv. 24–25)? This is quite an audacious move on Paul’s part, and there is little in the OT to back up his identification. But it may be the theme of

“slavery” that, for Paul, justifies the identification. As we have seen, the “free/slave” contrast is fundamental to the argument of this paragraph. Hagar, of course, is identified explicitly by the OT text as a “slave woman” (see vv. 22–23). Now, Paul claims, the “present Jerusalem” is also “enslaved with her children” (δουλεύει ... μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς, douleuei ... meta tōn teknon autēs). The γάρ (gar) that introduces this clause may, then, be causal: “the Hagar Sinai mountain represents the present Jerusalem, because it (like Hagar) is in slavery.” MOO

Though the false teachers proudly consider themselves related to Abraham by Sarah and Isaac, Paul says that they are spiritually descended from the slave woman, the Gentile, the outcast. Their heart and approach to God is like Abraham with Hagar, and the fruit in their lives is like Ishmael—just more slavery! KELLER

26 But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.

The idea of a “heavenly Jerusalem” (“the Jerusalem that is above”) has a rich Jewish background. The concept has to do with the culmination of God’s redemptive purposes in human history, the realization of God’s reign in its totality. As such, it is an eschatological concept that describes Jerusalem as it will be at the end of time, often in contrast to what the city is at present. References to a “heavenly Jerusalem” are to be found in embryonic form in the Jewish Scriptures (e.g., Ps 87:3; Isa 54 [the opening verse of which Paul quotes in 4:27]; Ezek 40–48), in Jewish wisdom literature (e.g., Sir 36:13ff.; Tob 13), and in more developed form in the apocalyptic writings of Second Temple Judaism (cf. 1 Enoch 53.6; 90.28–29; 2 Enoch 55.2; Pss. Sol. 17:33; 4 Ezra 7:26; 8:52; 10:25–28; 2 Apoc. Bar. 4.2–6; 32.2; 59.4; also of relevance here are 1QM 12.1–2 and 4QShirShab, which speak of angelic ministry in a heavenly temple). The idea of a “heavenly Jerusalem” in contrast to the present Jerusalem appears a number of times in rabbinic literature as well (e.g., b. Ta’an. 5a; b. Hag. 12b; Gen. Rab. 55.7; 69.7; Num. Rab. 4.13; Midr. Pss. 30.1; 122.4; Cant. Rab. 3.10; 4.4; Pesiq. R. 40.6), though without reflecting negatively on Judaism itself. This concept of a “heavenly” or “new” Jerusalem also epitomized the hopes of Jewish Christians, as in Heb 11:10, 14–16; 12:22; 13:14; and Rev 3:12; 21:2, where the full realization of God’s kingdom and Christ’s reign is set out in terms of a “heavenly” or “new” Jerusalem that was looked forward to by the patriarchs and is now experienced by Christians in inaugurated fashion. LONGENECKER

But, of course, it is fundamental to Paul’s argument here, and to NT teaching in general, to claim that the eschatological realities to which the image of “new Jerusalem” refers have, in fact, entered into history in the work of Christ: the “fullness of the time” has arrived (4:4). He therefore produces a combination of the spatial (explicit) and temporal (implicit) categories in a way typical of some streams of NT teaching (particularly some found in Hebrews). MOO

Picking up a key motif from this paragraph, Paul affirms that this new Jerusalem, like Sarah (vv. 22, 23), is “free.” This assertion of freedom undoubtedly has some allusion to “freedom from the law,” since subjection and even slavery to the law has been a prominent theme in 3:23–4:11 and is hinted at here in the association of Sinai and slavery. This is confirmed by the summary of this text in 5:1, which calls on believers to stand “in freedom” and not to submit again to a “yoke of slavery,” a clear reference to the law (see 5:2–4). At the same time, slavery to the law points to and leads to slavery to sin (3:22), and it is this fundamental spiritual condition that ultimately characterizes the present Jerusalem, along with all her “children.” Apart from Christ, Jewish people live under a state of condemnation into which subjection to the law has led them. MOO

Paul has also argued that the Law was a pedagogue (or household slave) to lead them to Christ. PK

The imagery of motherhood, birth, and children arises from the dual influences of the Sarah/Hagar story (vv. 22–23) and the Isa. 54:1 text, which Paul quotes in verse 27. MOO

The reference to “Jerusalem that is above” as being “our mother” also draws on a rich Jewish heritage. For example, Ps 87 is a song that praises Jerusalem (Zion) as the mother of God’s own, while Isa 66:7–11 describes Jerusalem (Zion) as a mother in labor bringing forth a son (cf. also Isa 50:1). Furthermore, in 4 Ezra 10 Zion is called “the mother of us all” (v 7), represented in Ezra’s vision as a barren woman who becomes the heavenly Jerusalem and finally gives birth to a son (vv 25–57). Here in his Hagar-Sarah allegory, therefore, Paul conflates two Jewish traditions: the first, that of Sarah, the barren freeborn wife of Abraham, who was destined to be the mother of nations; the second, that of the holy city Jerusalem, the eschatological Zion, who symbolically is the mother of God’s own. LONGENECKER

Since, therefore, “the Jerusalem that is above” is an eschatological term expressing a reality that will exist in the future, Paul’s use of it here for the experience of the Galatian believers implies that, as Paul understood matters, the Galatian believers had come into the eschatological situation of already participating in that future reality, in that the promise made to Abraham was fulfilled in Christ (cf. 3:16; 5:1). LONGENECKER

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.”

The prophecy of Isaiah looks back to Genesis 16, in which God looks down on two women, one beautiful and fertile, the other barren and old, and He chooses to save the world through the barren one. And through her family would come another unlikely son, born to another woman who could have no expectation of being pregnant, not because she was barren but because she was a virgin. And through that Son, all the peoples of the world would be blessed, just as God promised Abraham and Sarah. That is how God’s grace works. KELLER

Isaiah 54:1 enables Paul to do much more than simply contrast Sarah and Hagar (a move that is, after all, evident in the Genesis text itself). What is more important is that it enables Paul to line up Sarah with the “Jerusalem above” and Hagar with the “present Jerusalem.” In Isaiah, therefore, Sarah is lined up with the “new” Jerusalem, while Hagar is implicitly identified with the present city. Here Isaiah combines Abrahamic covenant language with the tradition of the restoration of Zion and return from exile (Harmon 2010: 178–79). The text portrays two parallel reversals, as “the barren and desolate woman becomes a joyful mother and the ravaged city becomes a nurturing metropolis overflowing with inhabitants” (Eastman 2007: 129). Paul is convinced, of course, that the “new Jerusalem,” representing the age to come, has come into being and that it is through his Spirit-empowered preaching of the gospel that this new Jerusalem is being populated. And this gospel, Paul is convinced, is only truly the gospel if it is a matter of a freely offered gift, apart from any human contribution. Thus Paul’s gospel-oriented reading of Isa. 54:1, in its context, convinces him that Sarah represents the new age, made available to humans by the life-giving gospel. MOO

Religion and philosophy in general say that God and salvation are only for those who are good. That’s an exclusive message. Now, the gospel is also exclusive. It says that God and salvation are only for those who know they are not good. But the gospel has a far more inclusive exclusivity! Anyone can belong to God through the gospel, regardless of record and background, regardless of who you have been or what you have done or how weak you are. Rule-keeping religion is for the noble, the able, the moral, the strong, but the gospel is for anyone. KELLER

So everyone has a worshipful faith in something from which they must derive that value. But these things control us as we seek them, disappoint us if we find them, and devastate us if we lose them. KELLER

²⁸ Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise.

With the clinching quotation from Isa. 54:1, which, as we have seen, provides so much of the hermeneutical justification for Paul's application of the Sarah and Hagar narrative, Paul is now in position to apply to the Galatians the conclusions he wants to draw from his interpretation (Bonnard 1972: 99; Harmon 2010: 181). Verses 28 and 31 frame this conclusion, with similar assertions: "You are children of the promise." "We are children of the free woman." In verses 29–30, Paul raids the Genesis narrative one more time to suggest a parallel between the Galatians and the agitators/Jews, on the one hand, and Isaac and Ishmael, on the other; on the basis of this comparison, he calls on his readers to take action (v. 30). MOO

Paul's claim that Christians are children κατὰ Ἰσαάκ makes a similar point. Isaac is not named in Paul's earlier exposition, but readers would have no trouble identifying Isaac as the child of Abraham born to the "free woman" "through a promise" in verses 22–23. The κατὰ therefore means "like," "just as" (BDAG 513.5.b.α), "in the pattern of" (Martyn 1997: 444; Witherington 1998: 338; Hays 2000: 305): "Just as Isaac was, so you also are children born as a result of and in conjunction with the promise of God." This likeness includes both the means ("as God graciously does what he has promised") but also perhaps the outcome ("as God gave life to Sarah's 'dead' body, so in conjunction with the resurrection of Christ, he gives life to people 'dead in trespasses and sins' "; Eph. 2:1; see Rom. 4:17–21). MOO

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.

The emphasis is on the two types of people the two sons represent, those who live out their lives in terms of legal ordinances and those who live their lives by the Spirit's direction. LONGENECKER

Paul's arguments from the Galatians' experience and Scripture in 3:1–14 were interlaced with references to "the Spirit" (cf. 3:2, 3, 5, 14), but thereafter the word "promise" (or "promises") dominated the discussion (cf. 3:16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 29; 4:28), taking the place not only of "Spirit" but also of "gospel" (1:7–9, 11; 2:2, 5, 7, 14; 3:8) and "blessing" (3:8, 9, 14), and laying the basis for treatments of "inheritance" (cf. 3:18; 4:1–7, 21–31). Here, however, Paul uses κατὰ πνεῦμα ("according to the Spirit") in roughly synonymous fashion with δι' ἐπαγγελίας ("as a result of promise") in v 23 and ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ("children of promise") in v 28, with references to the Spirit being dominant thereafter (cf. 5:5, 16–18, 22, 25; 6:8). In effect, then, all of Paul's previous references to the gospel, the Spirit, the promise, the blessings, and the inheritance become focused here and throughout the rest of the letter in terms of the Spirit's presence and guidance in a believer's life. LONGENECKER

Before Paul can continue to apply his exposition of Sarah and Hagar and their respective children to the Galatians, he must revert once more to the story to make a further comparison. Since Paul then seems to be adding another comparison to his list, it may be that the ἀλλά (alla, but) introducing the verse should be given a continuative force (Betz 1979: 249; R. Longenecker 1990: 216; Schreiner 2010: 305). But it is better to retain the usual adversative meaning of ἀλλά, assuming a bit of an ellipsis: "You have the benefit of being children of promise (v. 28); but do not think that this exempts you from suffering; rather you are undergoing persecution just as Isaac once did" (Mussner 1988: 329). MOO

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."

” The climax of Paul’s Hagar-Sarah allegory comes in the exhortation of v 30. Here Sarah’s uncharitable words in Gen 21:10 are applied to the situation in Galatia, though Paul attributes them not to Sarah but to “the Scripture” and adapts them to the Galatian context by changing “my son Isaac” (LXX: τοῦ υἱοῦ μου Ἰσαάκ) to “the son of the free woman” (τοῦ υἱοῦ της ἐλευθέρας). LONGENECKER

The quotation of the OT text serves two purposes for Paul. First, by again introducing the language of “inheritance” (3:29; 4:1–2, 7), Paul makes explicit what the defining issue is between Isaac and Ishmael, and all those “descended” from them. Both are “sons” (v. 22); both will be the progenitors of nations (on Ishmael, see Gen. 17:20; 21:13); but only one is an “heir,” to whom is promised all of God the Father’s spiritual blessings. Second, by omitting any reference to Sarah as the original speaker in the OT text, Paul is able to cite scriptural warrant for the action he expects the Galatians to take: they are to “cast out the slave woman and her son” (ἔκβαλε τὴν παιδίσκην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς, ekbale tēn paidiskēn kai ton huion autēs). MOO

³¹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

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