

Paul's letter to the Galatians



Abraham's Two Sons

Galatians 4:21-31

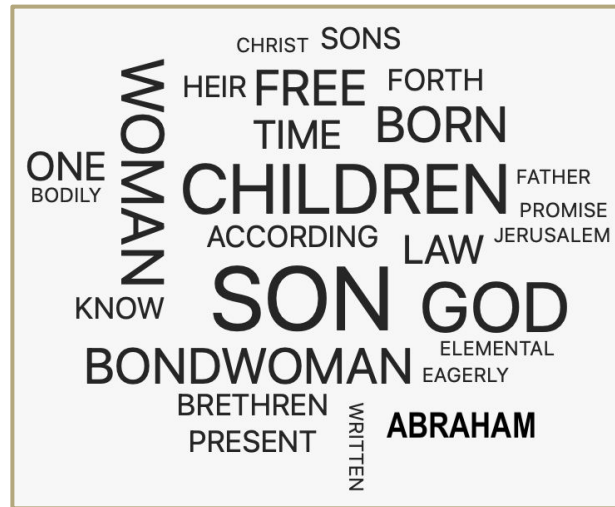


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Relationship to God as “sons”

- The Judaizers emphasized their heritage from Abraham as the basis for a right standing before God. Paul had shown that “it is those who are of ***faith*** who are sons of Abraham” (3:7).
- Variations of “**son**” and “**child**” occur eleven times in the final ten verses of Galatians 4.
- This relationship as sons or children of God comes only by faith in God and His promises.



Contrasts regarding God's Grace and the Law

GRACE	LAW
True gospel (1:4)	Distorted gospel (1:7)
God's grace alone (1:6)	[human effort]
Seeking the favor of God (1:10)	Seeking the favor of men (1:10)
Liberty in Christ Jesus (2:4)	Bondage (2:4)
No circumcision (2:3)	Circumcision (2:12)
Justified by faith alone (2:16)	Not justified by works (2:16)
Dead to the Law (2:19)	[living in bondage to the Law]
New life: Christ lives in me (2:20)	Cannot impart life (3:21)
[righteousness only by grace]	No righteousness through the Law (2:21)
Hearing with faith (3:2)	Legalistic works (3:2)
Perfect by the Spirit (3:3)	Perfect by the flesh (3:3)
Abrahamic covenant of grace (3:6-9)	[Mosaic covenant of works]

GRACE	LAW
Redeemed from the curse (3:13)	Cursed through the Law (3:10)
Promises to Abraham endure (3:17)	Only a temporary measure (3:19)
Inheritance granted by promise (3:18)	[inheritance not earned by works of the Law]
Unilateral covenant - no mediator (3:20)	Bilateral agreement via mediator (3:20)
No longer under a tutor (3:25)	In custody under the Law (3:22-24)
Sons of God through faith (3:26)	[no sonship gained through Law]
All one in Christ (3:28)	Divisions and distinctions (3:28)
Adoption as emancipated sons (4:5)	Children held in bondage (4:3)
A son and heir (4:7)	A slave (4:7)

Remembering Old Testament history (4:21-23)

- **“want”** (*thelō*) to be under the Law. They are determined or have made the decision to put themselves under legalistic Judaism.
- Paul appealed to the authority of the Old Testament to graphically illustrate the difference between Law and Grace.
- **“Abraham had two sons”** ~ one by the bondwoman according to the flesh, and one by the free woman through the promise.
- One represented purely human scheming and the works of the flesh. The other represented the gracious supernatural work of God on behalf of one who trusts in Him.

Building the analogy on Hagar's side (4:24-25)

- **“allegorically speaking”** (*allēgoreo*) ~ using **analogy** to communicate an idea. He will use the historical facts of Abraham's two sons to represent two different ways of approaching God.
- **“Hagar”** the maidservant ~ stands for the bilateral covenant of works – the Mosaic Law – which the children of Israel agreed to at **“Mount Sinai.”** Hagar was in bondage to Sarah, so any children she might bear would also be born into bondage.
- **“corresponds to the present Jerusalem”** ~ the headquarters of Judaism during Paul's day, so it represented the Jews' bondage to the Law under the Mosaic covenant.

Building the analogy on Sarah's side (4:26-28)

- **“the Jerusalem above”** ~ the heavenly Jerusalem corresponds to Sarah and represents God's unilateral, unconditional covenant of grace received by faith alone.
- Sarah will rejoice not only because God fulfilled His promise regarding her physical descendants, but also because of the vast number of children of promise through faith (Isa 54:1).
- **“like Isaac, are children of promise”** ~ Isaac had been conceived and born through the supernatural involvement of God in fulfillment of His promise to Abraham. This affirms that believers are “sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (3:26).

Conclusions from the analogy (4:29-31)

- **“he who was born according to the flesh** (Ishmael) **persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit”** (Isaac) ~
“so it is now also” ~ those who seek justification by works of the Law will continue to oppose those seeking justification by faith.
- **“cast out the bondwoman”** ~ the principle of justification by works cannot coexist with salvation by God’s grace through faith.
- **“not children of a bondwoman, but of the free woman”** ~ only the children of promise will inherit the blessings God promised to Abraham. Those who are free by God’s grace must not put themselves under bondage to the Law.

Summary

- Paul appealed to the history of Abraham's two sons to graphically illustrate the difference between the principles of Law and Grace.
- One represented purely human effort, while the other represented God's gracious supernatural work on behalf of one who trusts in Him.

GRACE	LAW
Represented by the free woman [Sarah] (4:22)	Represented by the bondwoman [Hagar] (4:22)
The work of God alone [freedom] (4:23)	Human works in the flesh [bondage] (4:23)
Receives the promised inheritance (4:30)	Is an outcast from the promises (4:30)