



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Galatians 4:21-31

Galatians

"Two Kinds of People"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] This morning we're in Galatians Chapter 4 and we're going to look at versus 21 through 31, Paul's explanation of the allegory.

Tell me you who want to be under law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the freewoman. The son of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh and the son of the freewoman through the promise. This is allegorically speaking for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves. She is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem for she is in slavery with her children but the Jerusalem above is free. She is our mother for it is written: "Rejoice barren woman who does bear. Break forth and shout you who are in labor for more numerous are the children of the desolate than of the one who has a husband and you, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise but as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit so it is now all also." What does the Scripture say? "Cast out the bondwoman and her son for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the freewoman." So then brethren we are not children of a bondwoman but of the freewoman.

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for the time we have together here this morning and we can meet as your people on this Lord's Day and read the Scriptures and seek your blessing upon us in every aspect of life because we need your blessings in every aspect of life materially, physically and certainly spiritually and, Father, we look at the prayer list that we have and we're reminded of our physical needs. Many people who are sick or facing surgery or undergoing a variety of difficulties, we pray for them. We look to you for blessing because you are the source of all the blessings that we have the source of our life.

We live and we move and we exist in you. That is true of all your creatures, all of your creation. The entire universe as vast as it is really beyond our comprehension it is but a speck of dust to you and it exists in you, you hold it all together, your Son holds it all together and is bearing history along, carrying this world along and every moment of our existence is a gift from you. You will it to be. For you to cease willing that we exist, for you to cease sustaining us at every moment we would cease to be so we come to you because we're completely dependent upon.

We are dependent for every moment of our life and so we pray, Lord, that you bless us, materially, bless those who are sick, give them healing, those who are facing surgery, bless the doctors who will attend to them. We pray that you'd give them quick recoveries, successful surgeries. We pray for those that are out of work. We pray that you give them patience and diligence and that you would open doors of opportunity.

Lord, the list could go on of the things that we need prayer for and I know you know far better than we, what our needs are better than we ourselves know our own needs and so I pray, Lord, that you would bless us, materially and physically and, certainly, in this hour, bless us spiritually and open our hearts to receive the Truth.

Help us to understand to understand the great subject of grace that Paul is unfolding for us in this text and as he has done all through

the Book of Galatians and, in fact, as is unfolded all through The Bible, all 66 books of it so, Lord, guide us in our thinking and build us up in the faith and make the proper applications to each of us individually and may we be equipped for the day and the week ahead and bless us each day and bless this assembly, bless this church with faithfulness to your truth, faithfulness to The Gospel and bless us with lives that are full of joy and peace that we should have as we understand your grace and your care for us so we commit our time to you now, Lord. We pray you'd bless it, prepare our hearts for a time of study together and we pray this in Christ's name, Amen.

[Message] There are many ways to analyze and divide the world. We do it according to race, religion, region, language and nation, which separate the world into many different parts. The ancients were much simpler. The Greeks divided the world in two. Everyone was either a Greek or a Barbarian. They took great pride in their language and culture. The Jews divided the world in two as well between the Jews and the Gentiles, The Nation and the nations. They were God's Chosen People and all others were outside the pale. The Apostles also divided the world in two parts but in a very different from these others, in a way that included every tribe and tongue and people and nation. They divided it spiritually between believers and non-believers, between the Children of God and the children of the devil.

The Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper described God's people as sons of palingenesis from the Greek word *palingenesia*, which speaks of regeneration. Literally it means being born again. Everyone obviously has a natural birth. What distinguishes people is the spiritual birth so people are either born again or they are not. That's very similar to Paul's description in Galatians 4 where he writes of two children, two sons of Abraham, one a son of works, the other a son of grace.

The Jews took great pride in their ancestry and understandably they could claim David and Solomon as part of their family tree, Moses and the prophets, they had great ancestors but the greatest of

all was Abraham, a man revered all over the world. In John 8:33 and 39 they boasted to Christ, the Jews did, that “We are Abraham’s offspring” and they said to Him, “Abraham is our father.” That idea, we are Abraham’s offspring, is what they felt gave them gravitas in the world and with God, “We are pleasing to God,” they were saying “because we have Abraham in our lineage. We come from and that makes us important in the eyes of God.” Well, this idea of the importance of ancestry and hereditary rights was strong among the Jews and fatal. Physical descent impresses men. It doesn’t impress God. John the Baptist told the Jewish leaders: “God is able from these stones to raise up sons to Abraham.”

What matters ultimately is not physical birth. It’s not our lineage. It’s spiritual birth. Jesus told Nicodemus: “You must be born again.” Literally that means you must be born from above. You must be born of God. You must have a supernatural, spiritual birth to inherit the Kingdom of God and that’s what Paul teaches here in our passage, in Galatians 4:21-31. There are only two kinds of people, the Judaizers; the teachers of The Law were of one kind. They had come to Galatia boasting of their natural birth and heritage in Abraham and even though the Galatians were gentiles and could not be sons of Abraham by natural descent, these Jewish teachers assured them that they could be adopted into Abraham’s family by circumcision, by putting themselves under the law and, in so doing, they would enjoy all of the covenant blessings of the Law.

Now Paul answered that earlier in Chapter 3 by showing that salvation has nothing to do with law keeping. Abraham was declared righteous long before the Law was ever given. In fact Abraham was declared righteous by faith alone before circumcision was given to him. He was declared righteous in Genesis: 15. It’s years later in Genesis: 17 that the right of circumcision was given to him. A person becomes a son of Abraham not by keeping the Law but by being like Abraham, by believing as Abraham did. “Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him unto righteousness” but Paul now comes back

to Abraham and he comes back to him for the last time in the Book of Galatians because Abraham had two sons who show us who is a true son of Abraham and how a person obtains the blessings of Abraham this privilege of being declared righteous and accepted by God as righteous, once and forever and entering into all of the promises, the great inheritance that was given to Abraham.

“The lesson,” he says in Verse 21, “is for those who want to be under Law,” and that was the Galatians. They were enamored of The Law. They were being drawn into that legalistic system of Judaism. It was for them but really this lesson transcends time and place. It’s a problem in every generation. Largely people who give any thought to eternity and their soul largely want to build their own highway to Heaven by rules and personal effort. That was true of the Galatians. They’d heard about grace. They’d been taught grace. They’d been grounded firmly in grace when Paul originally came to Galatia there in Southern Asia Minor but soon after these teachers came in and drew them away from that and they became, as I said, enamored of The Law and so “you who want to be under The Law,” he says, “there’s a lesson for you from The Law” so Paul gives that lesson. It’s on this very thing, Verse 22: “For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the freewoman.” Those two sons are Ishmael and Isaac whose births occurred under very different and significant circumstances.

When Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldeans and if you wanna put Ur of the Chaldeans on a map in your mind it is in modern-day Iraq. That’s where Abraham was born and that’s where he lived until God called him out of there when he was 75 years old. At that time he was Abram, which means “exalted father” but the exalted father was childless and his wife, Sarah, was barren but when God called him, He made him a promise. He said, “Go forth to your country to the land which I will show you and I will make you a great nation.” Everything was against that. He was an old man, he’s 75 years old, his wife was barren but Abraham was a man of faith. This

is what distinguishes him. He believed God. He obeyed God. He came out of that land. He came to Canaan believing the promises of God but God gave him no child. Years went by and still Abram was childless. It was a great trial for both him and Sarah. The promise was given but it was impossible for them to achieve. Some ten years later God again spoke to Abram, in Genesis: 15 and He reaffirmed the promises. He called him outside of his tent one night and he told him to look up at the heavens and number the stars. Then he said, "So shall your decedents be."

Abram was now 85 years old and still childless. It wasn't for lack of trying but the biological clock was ticking and time was running out. The problem must have troubled Abram greatly. God had clearly given him a promise but it wasn't happening. Maybe the question entered his mind why, why isn't happening? It certainly bothered Sarah because she knew exactly why the promise wasn't being fulfilled. She knew what the problem was, she was the problem. She was barren but she got an idea. She had a handmaid, Hagar, a slave from Egypt. She would give her to Abram and he could have a child by her. It sounds like a strange practice to us but it was all perfectly legal. The ancient marriage contracts of the time stated that if a wife proved childless she was to provide her husband with a slave wife to produce heirs so following the custom of the day she told Abram, "Go into my maid, perhaps I shall obtain children through here." Abraham did and from Hagar the slave, he produced a son, Ishmael.

Now at the age of 86 he was no longer Exalted Father without a son. He proved himself strong. He proved himself virile and able. Ishmael was proof Abraham's ability and what one writer called, "The result of outworking of the philosophy that God-helps-those-who-help-themselves." After all Sarah and Abram knew God's promise, they knew God's promise. They knew what He had promised to give them, a son, and yet they couldn't do it, produce this child themselves

and so they tried to help that promise, help God along with their own efforts but God doesn't need our help.

God knows the end from the beginning and he's working everything out according to His plan with perfection. He always fulfills His promises in His way and His time, not ours. We're simply to trust Him. We're simply to know His Word, believe it, trust it, rest in it, wait on Him. Abram didn't. He had a lapse in faith, he acted in the flesh and the product of that **who** became his pride and joy would be a source of great sadness and trouble in his family and his life. It's always the result of not trusting God's Word, of not waiting on Him and, instead, taking matters into our own hands, flexing our spiritual muscles and acting in the flesh but it wasn't long before the problems began. Hagar's ability to conceive gave her a sense of superiority over her mistress, Sarah. She could conceive, Sarah couldn't and that filled Hagar with a sense of pride and joy and she began to gloat. It was insulting to Sarah and it was humiliating. Hagar and her son were a constant thorn in her side and a reminder to Sarah that she was unable. It was a reminder of her inability and that went on for years but Ishmael wasn't the son of promise. God would not fulfill the promise through Hagar.

God does things differently from the way man does them. His ways are not our ways. He is the God of mighty things. He is the God of the humanly impossible. He is the God of the supernatural, the God of grace not works and when Abram was 99, God again visited him, changed his name from Abram, "Exalted Father," to Abraham, "Father of a Multitude" and said that Sarah would have a son. You would call his name Isaac and he would be heir, not Ishmael so now Abraham is father of a multitude and without an heir, without a legitimate son and well past the age of producing children. By now he's 99 years old. He cannot produce children and his wife, Sarah, she hasn't changed. She's still barren. It's an impossible situation but all of that was by design, all part of God's plan because now that Abraham was no

longer potent, no longer able, he had to rely completely upon the promise and the power of God.

God never fails in His promises. When Abraham was 100 years old Isaac was born whose name means "Laughter." He was a miracle child, proving that nothing is too great or difficult for God to do. He brings life out of death. He produces joy where there is sadness. God is able to raise up children to Abraham from stones and that was a very purpose for God waiting so long to give Abraham and Sarah their child. Don't be discouraged if the blessings you seek and you should have don't come immediately. There's a reason for the delay, you don't know it. I don't know it. It tests our patients. God has a purpose in those things and here the purpose was very plain. It was to make a clear and important demonstration to this family and to God's people down through the ages and to the world that God's blessings come by His grace, not by our ability, not by the things that we can do so He shows that to Abraham and Sarah with this child that's given to them, this child that brings great joy, this child of laughter. He shows them that the promises come by His power and grace and not by man's effort.

Now Abraham had two sons, one by Hagar the slave and one by Sarah the freewoman and the boys grew up together until Isaac was weaned. Now traditionally Jewish women would wean their children late in the child's life when they were about three years old, which would've made Ishmael 17 years old at the time. This was a big occasion, this weaning of the child. It was a time in which a great feast, a party, a banquet was given and it's recorded for us in Genesis, 21, and they gave a great party to celebrate it.

Abraham gave a feast but during the celebration Sarah saw something. You can imagine the providence of God working this out. There's a lot of activity going on and we don't know where Sarah was but, at the right moment, something catches her eye where she looks over at the right moment and she sees Ishmael mocking Isaac, laughing at him and she saw more in that than a brother's playful

conduct. If you have sons or you have brothers, I grew up in a family of four brothers and there was lots of taunting and teasing and all of that that goes on. That's a natural part of a family, I guess. That's not a good part I know but it happens and we don't think much of it but Sarah saw this and saw something more that wouldn't normally occur. She recognized in the mocking and hostility, which she knew to be dangerous for Isaac so she insisted that Abraham drive out Hagar and Ishmael from the family.

Abraham was reluctant. He loved Ishmael. Ishmael was the son of his potency, his ability but, apart from that, Abraham was a godly, loving father who loved this son, Ishmael, as he should love this son and so because it was his son he didn't do that and even the ancient law codes protected the slave-wife from being expelled from the family so he resisted but Sarah had more insight here than Abraham and God again spoke to him and He told him to listen to his wife and there's a bit of a lesson in that for us men because sometimes our wives have something to say and we should pay attention to them. In fact as you read through The Bible you see frequently that the wife has more insight than the husband, listen, and here this great man of God, Abraham, has less insight than Sarah.

Sarah knows what's happening. She sees something that he doesn't and God confirms that. He says, "Listen to what she said for through Isaac your decedents shall be named" and so Ishmael and Hagar were given food and water and sent away. Now that's the story where Paul finds the lesson and, in Verse 23, he sets it up by drawing out of these events two central facts about each son. They had different mothers and they had different births. Ishmael was born from the bondwoman and so he was a slave boy while Isaac was from the freewoman and he was free. Ishmael was born according to the flesh. That's the second point that he makes.

"Born according to the flesh" means according to nature, by Abraham's own power, while Isaac was born through the promise, contrary to nature. His father was 99 years old, well past the age of

producing children. Sarah was over 90 and she was barren and so the slave-child was natural, the free-child was supernatural. Ishmael was the result of Abraham's self-reliance while Isaac was the result of reliance on God. Those are the facts and from them Paul now draws a lesson. He introduces it by saying this story of Abraham is an allegory, Verse 24. It has a story behind it. Now in saying that, Paul didn't mean an allegory in our sense of the word, which is a story that gives a moral or spiritual truth without being historically true.

John Bunyan's story, *Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegory. It doesn't pretend to be history. In fact at the beginning writes, "I dreamed a dream." It's a fiction that illustrates spiritual truth. The events of Abraham's life are history. Paul meant that they are allegorical in the sense that they correspond to spiritual truth and so when he speaks of them being allegorical what he means is they are an illustration of spiritual truth. They're what we would call a type of spiritual truth and so when he speaks of them being allegorical what he means is that they are an illustration of spiritual truth. They are what we call a type of spiritual truth and The Bible is full of types. We give a great deal of attention when we read The Old Testament to typology, which makes a correspondence between a person or thing in the past and a person or thing in the future. It is a prophetic foreshadowing, a prophetic illustration. Israel's history is full of types of pictures, of illustrations. Its historical deliverance from Egypt is an illustration of our salvation.

Israel was redeemed from slavery in Egypt, a literal, historical slavery in Egypt and brought into Canaan into freedom and so we see in that an illustration of our redemption, our deliverance from spiritual slavery in Satan's domain under his rule and being brought into the Promised Land of Heaven and the list goes on: The sacrificial system, the lambs and the bulls that were offered up are pictures of the final sacrifice for our sin that is giving in Christ. The priesthood, the tabernacle, the temple, they're all literal historical events and persons and places and things that illustrate a great spiritual truth.

There're many of those that we could recount and that's the sense in which Paul is speaking here and he says in these events in Abraham's life that we have an allegory, meaning a type and he explains them. He shows the correspondence. He says the two women represent two covenants, the covenant God made with Abraham and the covenant that God made at Mount Sinai, the old covenant and the new covenant, the one representing grace and the one representing works.

Hagar the slave represents what proceeded from Mount Sinai. She could only bear slave children and The Law can only produce spiritual slaves. It can't give freedom. It can only put people in bondage. It has rules ("thou shalt" and "thou shalt not"). It puts us under those rules but it doesn't give us the power to do those rules so it is a heavy yoke that people strain under. Paul knew that from personal experience. He lived under The Law. He knew what it was to seek, to be obedient to The Law and maintain righteousness from The Law and he knew that no one can follow The Law perfectly and that law puts people in bondage, it shuts them up to their sin but it doesn't let them out. The Law condemns people but it doesn't provide an escape from its verdict. It holds people captive as slaves to constantly walk the treadmill without ever arriving or ever achieving and it does that deliberately, as Paul has explained, to show us that we cannot arrive, to show us that we cannot achieve a righteousness of God.

Hagar could only produce a slave child and the same is true of Judaism with its interpretation of The Law as the means of salvation, the only way of gaining God's approval. In Verse 25, Paul makes that connection. Hagar he says corresponds to Jerusalem, which represents Judaism. Jerusalem is the capital of the Jewish legal system; at least it was in Paul's day. It had the temple, the priesthood; the great schools of Jewish Law were there. It was the capital of Judaism, of that legal system, and like Hagar it can only produce spiritual slaves so Paul traces out a line of slavery from Hagar to Mount Sinai to the City of Jerusalem and her people for, he says, "she, that is Jerusalem,

like Hagar, is in slavery with her children” but there is another Jerusalem in Verse 26, the Jerusalem above and it is free, Paul says. She is our mother. In other words the capital of true religion, the supernatural, God-made religion is Heaven so it’s not enough to claim Abraham as one’s father. Ishmael claimed that but he was a slave.

The real question is, “Who is your mother, Hagar or Sarah?” Were you born from above or from below? Was your birth purely human or was it divine? Was it only natural or was it supernatural? Does it come from Heaven from earth? Those whose mother is the Jerusalem above, those who have been born from above are free, Paul says, like Isaac. Now I think it’s worth noting that Paul contrasts the present Jerusalem with the Jerusalem above and we might have expected because he speaks of the present Jerusalem that he would have spoken of the Jerusalem to come, the Future Jerusalem because that’s our great hope. We see in the Book of Revelation at the end in Chapter 21 the Jerusalem from above coming down. That’s the future but he doesn’t do that. He doesn’t say, “Jerusalem to come” and contrasts it to the present Jerusalem. He speaks of the Jerusalem above and he does that because there is a parallel reality with earthly Jerusalem and it is a city to which we can presently belong.

That future Jerusalem that is future to this earth, to its presence in the earth is in existence now. It is above and while we look forward to that future day, we have a present connection with it now. It’s not just a future hope. In Philippians 3:20, Paul says, “Our citizenship presently is in Heaven.” It doesn’t say, “Presently” in the text but that’s the sense of it. Right now as a believer in Jesus Christ, your citizenship is in Heaven. That’s a present reality so, as believers, we live with all of the privileges and the power of heaven though we live here on earth and that Jerusalem above, where Christ is, is presently producing spiritual children that are children of Abraham, spiritual children and heirs of all of the promises given to Abraham so there are two realities. There are two parallel worlds, one natural and one spiritual. There is Hagar the bondwoman and Sarah

the freewoman. There is Ishmael who had a natural birth. There is Isaac who had a supernatural birth. There is the Old Covenant of The Law. There is the New Covenant of Grace. There is earthly Jerusalem, Judaism and heavenly Jerusalem, Christianity.

There are two kinds of people in this world: Those who are of faith and free and those who are of works and enslaved. Paul supports this division from Scripture with a quote in Verse 27 from Isaiah 54:1 so this division, this interpretation of Sarah isn't something that comes out of Paul's imagination, it's grounded in Scripture. Isaiah taught the same thing. In there, in Chapter 54:1 he finds that this spiritual lesson in Sarah that gives a picture of God's life giving grace. Now this statement that he makes in Isaiah 54:1 obviously follows Isaiah 53:11, which is the great description, that chapter of Isaiah 53 of the suffering servant. It's a picture of Christ and his work of redemption and what he would do for us and there in Isaiah 53:11 he says: "My servant, the Messiah, the Christ, will justify the many as he will bear their iniquities." How will he be justified? How can a man be just before God? Well, not by his works. Isaiah says it. It's by the work that the Messiah would do the work of the servant, who will bear their iniquities. God will justify the many as he says there because he punishes their sins in a substitute. Well

Well, having said that and based on the work of redemption, Isaiah then writes in that next chapter, the next verses, the glorious future, he writes in that next chapter, the next versus of the glorious future, he writes: "For it is written rejoice barren woman who does not bear, break forth and shout you who are in labor for more numerous are the children of the desolate than of the one who has the husband." It's a contrast between Hagar and Sarah and it's a prophesy there in Isaiah of future blessing for Israel. It's a promise that ethnic Israel has a future but here Paul takes that statement of Isaiah and he applies it to the church as being fulfilled in the church with gentile salvation and the reason he can do that is because everyone, whether

it's Jew or gentile, is saved in the same way by grace alone, through faith alone and it's always been that way as Abraham is the proof.

From the beginning of time to the end there's only one way of salvation and so whether it's a Jew or a gentile, whether the promise is to Israel or not, it applies to all men and Paul does that here and what he's doing here in this application is the same that he does in Romans 11:11-24 with the parable of the olive tree and the wild branches, of the gentiles being grafted in to Israel's blessings and both Isaiah and Paul make it clear that this salvation is all of grace. The barren one, the one who has no ability will have numerous children just as Sarah did. Israel is barren now but they will be fruitful just as Sarah was fruitful and, in that, we have the great principle of this work of grace. We're saved by God's supernatural intervention in our lives.

That's the lesson of the two women and the two sons. It is the lesson of the triumph of grace and the failure of works and Paul applies that to the Galatians in Verse 28. He says: "You brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise." They are supernatural people. Just as Isaac was born physically by divine intervention so every believer is born spiritually by divine intervention and since their spiritual birth was like Isaac's birth they should expect that their lives will be Isaac's life and Isaac's life was a blessed life because it was a God-given life and we can expect as God's people to be blessed by Him. You have the best life that anyone could have if you are a believer in Jesus Christ and as you walk by the Spirit and Paul will go into that in Chapter 5 of Galatians: "As you live obediently even though times will be difficult, nevertheless you will live the best life that can be lived and God will bless you greatly," and so we can expect to have Isaac's kind of life, a blessed life, because we are the same as Isaac, supernatural people, we have a supernatural birth but Isaac also had a difficult life because he had a brother who persecuted him and that's Paul's point in Verse 29.

We too can expect to be persecuted just as Isaac was but as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit so it is now also. Paul's referring to the incident back in Genesis: 21 when Isaac was weaned and Ishmael at the age of 17 laughed at him, mocked him. It is natural for the flesh to persecute the spirit and we should expect that the world will be hostile toward the church. The two are fundamentally different from one another. The Lord was persecuted by the unbelieving religious and secular authorities. Paul was persecuted as have God's people down through the ages. Historically, that's most famously seen with the state's persecution of the church as in ancient times with Pagan Rome and in modern times with Communistic countries but it happens in tolerant times and places as well. It happens at work when coworkers ostracize a Christian who is vocal about his or her faith.

It happens in academic institutions. Abraham Kuyper, who I quoted at the beginning of our lesson, wrote that in Europe there were few Christians who had professorships or lectureships in The Sciences and he could write about that with authority because Abraham Kuyper was not only a great theologian but he was an academician. He was great in many ways. He was Prime Minister of Holland. He published journals but he was also a man who was of the Academy. He started one of the great universities of Holland, the Free University of Amsterdam so he knew about these things and he makes the statement that few Christians have professorships or lectureships in Science because those who appointed people to such positions are, as a rule, he wrote, inclined to exclude the sons of palingenesis and they exclude them because the sons of this earth, the natural man, doesn't see things the way the child of God does, the child of the New Birth. We have a different perspective from the way of the world.

In fact it's the opposite perspective and so those who have power to do so exclude those who have a spiritual Christian perspective on life. Now he wrote that over a century ago. It hasn't changed today. In fact it's probably much worse today. The West is

secularized and hostile toward the sons and daughters of the New Birth and so when you send your sons or your daughters off to college don't expect them to get a Christian education. You're really sending them to what is generally a hostile place for the faith so we shouldn't be surprised by that. That's the nature of things. That's what Paul is saying here and that's what Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 3:12:

“And indeed all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Isaac is always mocked and persecuted by Ishmael. Those who follow legalism, the religion of redemption by human effort, the religion of salvation by works will always oppose grace because they want to point to their own achievements and grace strips them of that so they persecute those of grace and they do it in various ways but here, as in the context of the Galatians it is by trying to bring people under the bondage of The Law and the legalistic system.

There are essentially two religions in the world. One of law and one of grace, one of works and one of faith and the two cannot be mixed, they cannot live together, they cannot be tolerated and so Paul gives the Galatians some decisive instruction in Verse 30: “Since they are like Isaac, they must follow the counsel of his mother and get rid of the legalists.” That's the command of Scripture but what does The Scripture say, Paul asks? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the freewoman.” Sarah's action to us may seem harsh particularly as we go back into Genesis and consider it but it was necessary. Ishmael was a danger to Isaac and to the family of promise. He was a danger to the Work of God and the Work of Salvation. Isaac was Ishmael's rival and he would've overthrown him when he had the opportunity and Sarah recognized that. Her judgment was of God and here, by application to the Galatians situation, all was giving God's judgment on legalists. They could not live with men of faith, the two cannot be mixed. People of faith cannot tolerate legalism because those of this legalistic bent will seek to undermine God's work as those Judaizers

were doing in Galatians so, he says, they're to be thrown out. There's no middle ground.

Now we should be clear and I mention this because it's very easy at this point in one's thinking or in a study of such things to draw a wrong implication about grace and the meaning of legalism. Legalism does not mean the recognition of spiritual standards or rules. The New Testament is filled with rules and examples for us to follow and genuine believers do that. Genuine believers obey. That's a sign and evidence that we are genuinely born again because we long to be pleasing to God, we have a heart that desires to be obedient and we follow the rules of Scripture. We live obedient lives. Legalism is not the recognition of rules. Legalism is the belief that it is by following rules in our strength in our own ability that we gain God's favor, that we win his approval, that we obtain salvation. We do it by rule-keeping. We do it by ceremonies. That is completely contrary to grace. That is a denial of The Gospel so Paul says, "Cast out the bondwoman and her son." Then he concludes by summarizing his argument in Verse 31: "So then brethren we are not children of a bondwoman but of the freewoman." Believers in Jesus Christ are not under The Law. We are free from the Law of Moses through Christ and Paul was telling the Galatians that that was true of them; they're free from The Law. They're sons of the freewoman so they're to live as free people.

There are only two kinds of people in the world. We can describe them in a number of ways: As the free and the enslaved, as believers and non-believers, children of God and children of The Devil but what divides the world into two groups is the grace of God. We are all either the sons of palingenesis or the children of natural genesis. At the end of Chapter 3, Paul calls believers Abraham's decedents, heirs according to promise. It is not natural birth that makes a person Abraham's spiritual offspring and heir, it is grace, and Isaac is the great illustration of that. He was born by God's power, born according to the spirit, according to Verse 29 and the Christian is

born of the spirit, according to John 3:1-7: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit is spirit." Nicodemus came to Our Lord that night with the question in his mind, "What must I do to inherit the Kingdom of God" and before he ever spoke it, Jesus gave him the answer. He saw it in his mind. He read his thoughts and he said, "You must be born again." You cannot have it naturally. It has nothing to do with your natural birth. You have to be born again to enter the Kingdom of God. That is how salvation occurs. It is by grace through faith and the result is joy. The fruit of that blessed relationship that God gave to Abraham and Sarah was Isaac whose name means "laughter." He brought joy to his parents and salvation brings joy to us. The Law can't give that.

Life and joy are found in Christ and we have Christ through faith alone so have you believed in Him? If you have, then rejoice. You have been born again. You are a son of palingenesis, of the New Birth. You have eternal life. If you've not believed in Jesus Christ then look to him, cast out the bondwoman, through off The Law, turn away from every idea of saving yourself by your own effort. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. May God help you to do that and may He help all of us to understand His grace and rejoice in the great gift of life that He has given to us freely in His Son. Let's pray.

[Prayer] Father, we do thank you for this great story, this allegory that Paul gives us, this explanation of these events that occurred in ancient times but are relevant today just as they were then are timeless truths that there are just two kinds of people: Those who have a natural birth and those who have a spiritual birth and we have spiritual birth by your grace alone and we thank you that salvation from the first day to the last day is the same way. It's through your grace and faith in Christ. We thank you for sending Him for his death for us and to His name we pray. Amen.