

The Son of the Slave Woman

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- [0:00] I'd like you, if you have your own copy of the Scriptures, to open up to Genesis chapter 21. We're in the middle of this chapter this morning, Genesis chapter 21. And if you're using one of the Bibles that we have scattered around in the chairs, you can simply turn to page 15. Very close.
- To the front cover of your Bibles, page 15, or Genesis chapter 21. And this morning we're going to jump in in verse 8 and read not through the rest of the chapter, but through verse 21.
- And so as you find your place there in the Scriptures, I would like you guys to stand in honor of the Word. And we will read together. We're told, And the child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast.
- On the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, laughing. So she said to Abraham, Cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.
- [1:16] And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring.
- So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child and sent her away.
- And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. When the water and the skin was gone, she put the child under one of the bushes. Then she went down and sat down opposite him, a good way off, about the distance of a bow shot.
- For she said, Let me not look on the death of the child. And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy. And the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, What troubles you, Hagar?
- [2:19] Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation. Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water.
- And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. And God was with the boy and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow.
- He lived in the wilderness of Paran. And his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. Father, we thank you for this word. Thank you for this story that's recorded for us so that we might see the magnitude of your grace this morning.
- Teach us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Last week we covered the first seven verses of Genesis chapter 21. And there we saw finally, after many chapters and after many decades in the life of Abraham, we saw finally the fulfillment of God's promise to him.

That he would have a son. And not only that he would have a son, but as the promise was clarified, that he would have a son through his wife, Sarah. And that son would be the one to whom the covenant promises that God had made with Abraham, to whom they would be passed on.

[3:37] And so finally, after anticipation, after waiting, after wondering when these things would happen, we saw in a very short passage the birth of Isaac detailed for us.

And now we find ourselves suddenly shifting our focus from Isaac. The one that we've been waiting to see, the one that we want to hear about, the one that we want to learn about, we suddenly see, after verse 8, the first verse in this paragraph we're looking at now, we see a sudden shift away from Isaac to focus upon his older brother, Ishmael.

I want you to see how quickly the shift takes place because I think it's supposed to jar us a little bit. We're supposed to be expecting the story of Isaac to commence at this point, and yet there is a sudden turn.

Notice verse 8. And the child, we're still talking about Isaac, grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. And that's it. That's all we get about Isaac for now.

We will get his story. We will get plenty of details about his life. Yet for now, those details are going to have to wait. The only thing that we know is that between verse 7 and verse 8, we fast forward somewhere between 2 and 4 years, probably around 2 and a half, 3 years, to the point at which Isaac is weaned so that he's no longer being nursed by Sarah, his mother, which in itself is, it is miraculous that these things have even happened.

[5:04] I mean, Sarah exclaims at the end of that first paragraph, who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? It was an impossible thing for her to have children and then to be able to nurse them and nourish the child.

And yet, that initial early phase in the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham has been completed. The child grew. The child was weaned.

And because this was such a momentous occasion, Abraham throws, he throws a party. Now, there's no real evidence from the ancient Near East that this was a common practice.

In fact, it probably was very uncommon to have a party, to have a feast like this at the time of the weaning of a child. You would have a feast at the birth of a child. Later on in Israel's history, it was not uncommon for them to have a celebration and a kind of feast eight days after the birth at the time of the child's circumcision.

But to have a festival and a feast and a large party at this point in time at the weaning of the child was not, it wasn't just normal cultural practice. This is Abraham celebrating the life of this unexpected child.

[6:11] This is Abraham marking an occasion that they thought would never come. They thought that Sarah would never have children and that even if she did have children, she would not be able to nurse and care for those children and yet she's been able to do those things even at her advanced age.

And so Abraham throws a party. But immediately now in verse 9, the attention moves and shifts away from Isaac to his brother Ishmael.

And more specifically to Sarah, Sarah's attitude toward Ishmael. Take a look at what we read here in verse 9. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian whom she had born to Abraham laughing.

So she said to Abraham, cast out this slave woman with her son for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac. Now these seem like strange events.

It feels like Sarah's overreacting. It feels like she's saying things and doing things that are driven by perhaps jealousy, anger.

[7:19] We don't know. The text never specifically tells us exactly what emotions are driving her. But we know what her ultimate goal is. Her ultimate goal is to exclude Ishmael from the inheritance that her son Isaac will have.

And so upset and so angry is Sarah that she never even uses the name of Ishmael. She keeps referring to him as the son of that slave woman, Hagar. That's how she thinks of him.

She doesn't think of Ishmael as a vital, important member of the family even though he's Abraham's firstborn son. No. She looks down on him with contempt, wishes that he didn't exist, wishes that he weren't even there.

And all of that is due to this sordid history that we've already covered between Abraham and Sarah and Sarah's handmaid, Hagar. If you'll recall, back in chapter 16, Sarah became somewhat desperate.

We sort of speculated that she was probably approaching the stage of menopause and so now, really and truly, her having a child was coming to be seen as impossible and Abraham needed a son, needed a son not only to inherit the promises that God had given to him but also just needed a son in terms of passing on the things that he had.

[8:35] He's a wealthy man. He has accumulated a lot of goods throughout the years that he has been in the land of Canaan. And without a son, Abraham doesn't have a rightful heir. In fact, Abraham wonders and worries that one of his slaves, one of his servants will become his heir.

He'll have to designate a servant in his household as an heir. And so Sarah comes up with a plan, something that was not uncommon in their world at their time, that her servant, her personal handmaid, be given to Abraham as a sort of second wife, although a second class wife, so that she might become pregnant and bear a child.

And normally, in the ancient world, that child would be counted as the first wife's child. He would be seen as being her child. And yet, that's not how things unfold.

Sarah's plan implodes on her because she becomes jealous of Hagar because Hagar, she believes, is ridiculing her and looking down upon her because now Hagar is pregnant, Sarah's unable to be pregnant, and there's this tension that builds between them so much so that Sarah is so harsh and mean to Hagar that we find Hagar running out into the wilderness.

She returns eventually at God's own urging, but we see there the seeds that have already been sown for discord within the family of Abraham. I don't think that should surprise us.

[9:56] If you're familiar enough with the biblical story, you will notice that every time you walk through the Old Testament and you encounter polygamy, that is, every time you find an instance of multiple wives among the people of God.

So you see it with David. You see it with Solomon. You see it even with Abraham's more immediate offspring. You see that these problems arrive whenever they depart from the pattern that was initially set up and established in Genesis chapter 2.

That of a man and a woman becoming one flesh. Whenever they alter that pattern, whenever they deviate from that pattern, whenever they introduce polygamy into their relationships, it always causes family strife and serious family strife to the point of betrayal and murder and all sorts of things that unfold throughout the history of the people of God in the Old Testament.

We don't find in the Old Testament an outright condemnation of polygamy. In fact, it's treated very similar to the way that the Old Testament treats divorce. When Jesus looks back and deals with the issue of divorce and the Pharisees and others are quoting to him passages from the Old Testament, from the law that permit divorce, Jesus' response is, yes, but this was because of the hardness of your heart that God allowed these things.

This was not to be the pattern. This was not to be normal. And then Jesus Himself returns back and quotes from Genesis chapter 2. I think polygamy we ought to think of in the same way throughout the Old Testament.

- [11:23] It's a deviation from the norm and while it's not outright condemned in the law of Moses, we see the repercussions of it. We see the penalties as they unfold in the lives of those who move away from God's plan for marriage.

That is continuing to happen now here in Genesis chapter 21. But now it's moved beyond Sarah's mistreatment of Hagar now it's moving into Sarah's mistreatment and hatred of Ishmael himself.

Now what we are told actually happened is that Sarah looks and sees the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, laughing. That's how the ESV translates this term.

And if you'll remember some of the things that we noticed last week, you'll know that this is a key word here. This is not just an accidental phrase or this is not just the word that happens to be used.

This is a key word throughout this chapter, indeed throughout the last few chapters. Because the name Isaac itself means he laughs. And over and over in the first paragraph of chapter 21, we have this play on words with Isaac being named he laughs.

- [12:34] And then Sarah proclaiming God has made laughter for me. Everyone who hears will laugh over me. There it's laughter in a positive sense. Laughter in the sense of joy that God provides to her.

And now here we see this key word once again. But it's taking a turn. It's no longer viewed at least by Sarah in a positive manner. She sees Ishmael laughing and she takes it and perceives it to be some form of ridicule, some form of mockery.

We don't know because the text doesn't tell us. We don't know because it's not spelled out for us. Indeed, this term for laughter can refer to good joyous laughter or it can refer to a mocking mean-spirited laughter.

You only know by the context which of the two is meant. And by the context it seems to me to at least be clear that it's something negative. We don't know in what sense. Was Ishmael, was he actually outright mocking Isaac?

It's entirely possible. You can imagine yourself being the oldest son for all those years because by this time Ishmael's a young teenager. You've been the oldest son for all of these years.

- [13:47] You've been the one who's the presumed heir of your father's great fortune and all of the benefits that come along with that. And now there's this other boy born by Abraham's first wife who is now being celebrated at his weaning.

Who celebrated Ishmael at his weaning? This is strange. This is not normal. So you could see him being frustrated and perhaps making fun of his younger brother. It's entirely possible.

Or it could be that it was a more playful kind of mocking between the two of them. It wasn't meant to be taken in a harsh way. We don't know from the language itself. What we do know is that when we turn to the New Testament and Paul talks about this passage in Galatians chapter 4 that the apostle Paul says that Ishmael persecuted Isaac.

Isaac. Which means that we're probably seeing here in Genesis chapter 21 not merely good hearted laughter and jesting and joking among brothers but something more sinister.

Something deeper than that that Sarah recognizes. That does not make Sarah okay in her response to these things.

[14:56] This doesn't make it okay for Sarah to respond and do the things that she does but it helps us to understand the situation and the circumstances that something sinister is happening in the laughter of Ishmael toward his brother Isaac.

Sarah perceives it and Sarah will not stand for it. You can imagine also being in Sarah's shoes being in your 90's it's miraculous that you've even had this child and there is some uncertainty about his future in terms of how will the laws of inheritance be applied in this situation.

The regular laws of inheritance throughout the ancient Near East not just for the nation of Israel later on but the regular laws of inheritance is that the firstborn son would receive the larger portion usually something like two thirds of the inheritance and the rest of the inheritance would be divided out among however many other sons there might be.

And it's not clear among those various ancient laws how that is to be handled when you have the oldest son who is the son of a handmaid of a slave and the younger son who is actually the son of the first wife.

These things are not spelled out clearly and there are actually some contradictory laws when you begin to research and look into these things and so there's every reason to think that Sarah is already concerned about the future of her son.

[16:23] Already worried about that. Already thinking in her head that she needs to do something. Something's got to be done to protect him. And so here an opportunity presents itself.

Ishmael mistreating, mocking, laughing at his younger brother. Sarah's anger boiling at this point most likely. And so she says to Abraham cast out this slave woman with her son.

Not with your son. Notice notice the language she used. Get rid of the slave woman and her son. Get her son out of here. For once again here we see it the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac.

Again he's not treated by Sarah as a member of the family. He's not treated by Sarah as Abraham's very own son. He's just the son of the slave woman. Get him out of this household.

Cast him out. Put him away from us. He will not share in my son's inheritance. There could have been a case made that it was Isaac who was sharing in Ishmael's inheritance. But in Sarah's view Isaac deserves it all and Ishmael deserves none of it.

[17:32] But the only way to protect Isaac the only way for her to ensure that he receives the full inheritance is to get rid of Ishmael. And so she takes this opportunity to finally say to Abraham you're going to have to get rid of this slave woman the slave woman by the way who was her own personal handmaid whom she gave to Abraham so that she might become pregnant.

Get rid of this slave woman. Get rid of her son too. Get them out of our household. Get them out of my presence. He will not have a share in Isaac's inheritance. And Abraham does not respond by saying oh okay no big deal alright fine if that's what you want that's what I'll do.

No Abraham it at least appears at this point that he's learned his lesson from chapter 16. See the problem in chapter 16 when Sarah came to Abraham and offered him Hagar the language that's used there is that Abraham listened to the voice of his wife which is the exact same language that you find in the fall in Genesis chapter 3 where Adam listened to the voice of his wife.

And the point there is not that men shouldn't ever listen to the advice of their wives you'd be foolish if you didn't as a man. The point there though is that the man should be in a position of leadership and he shouldn't allow his wife to lead into sin.

And that's exactly what Adam does. He doesn't stand up for and protect his wife when she's tempted rather he just follows her headlong into sin. And Abraham does not stand up and protect Sarah and say no let's trust in the promises of God let's follow God let's see what God's going to do.

[19:00] No he just goes along with the plan because why not? For Adam the fruit does look good for Abraham he does get to sleep with this young woman so both of them headlong into sin.

Listen to the voice of their wives. Perhaps Abraham has learned that lesson. Because here he does not respond to Sarah by saying oh okay then that's what you want let's take care of this.

That may be the reason that Abraham resists. Moses tells us specifically though that Abraham saw this as an evil wicked thing. Notice the language here.

Verse 11 And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. Literally what the text says is and the thing was evil in the eyes of Abraham on account of his son.

Abraham can't bear to do this. This is his son. This is his son. Not a son that he's unfamiliar with but a son who's at the age of 13 or 14 perhaps. A son that he has been raising.

[20:04] A son that he loves. A son that he has assumed will be his heir now for quite some time. And now his wife is saying get rid of your son. No.

He can't do this. It's a wicked thing. It's an evil thing. And besides he loves his son. It's on account of his son that he won't do it. That would normally be the end of the story.

Sarah would be mad and disgruntled and perhaps maybe try a way to get back with Hagar or even Ishmael and make their lives even more difficult. That would normally just sort of be the end of it. And yet God steps in in a very unexpected way.

Notice what the Lord says. Verse 12. But God said to Abraham be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you do as she tells you.

Now that's a reversal. That's a change. Before he got in trouble you listened to the voice of your wife when she led you into sin. Now it's listen. Do what Sarah says.

[21:05] Do whatever she tells you. Why? Because God has a plan. Because He's doing something. Because He's up to something that we wouldn't expect or we wouldn't see normally if we hadn't already been reading through the book of Genesis together.

We suspect it because we've been reading the story but it would have been greatly unexpected to anyone else. Be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman. Whatever Sarah says to you do as she tells you.

For through Isaac shall your offspring be named. Your offspring will be counted through Isaac. And as I've said over and over and over through this series in Genesis this term offspring which literally means seed is a key term in the book of Genesis.

It traces all the way back to Genesis chapter 3 where after the fall we are told that Eve that there would be a seed of the woman. That a woman would bear a child and that that child that seed or offspring would reverse the effects of the fall.

He would undo the damage done by the serpent in the garden. And so every time we come across this term offspring or seed particularly when it's connected to the line of Abraham our ears should perk up.

[22:17] This is the covenant promises being passed on. For God this is not about who inherits Abraham's goods. That's not what this is about for God. For God this is about who receives the covenant promises.

And God says it's Isaac that receives the covenant promises not Ishmael. Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.

But God is not without compassion and kindness. And actually I think that the next few verses and the second paragraph of this passage I think it centers upon this point that God's arm is not so short that it cannot reach out in kindness even toward those who are outside the covenant people.

God's grace is not so limited and small that He cannot extend some degree of grace even to those who are outside of the people of God.

It is made clear here that Ishmael is outside the covenant people. He will not be counted by God as belonging to the covenant people. Therefore he will not receive the blessings and benefits of the promises given to Abraham which trace back to the promises in the garden and therefore are all about redemption.

[23 : 42] And Ishmael is excluded from those redemptive promises. And if you scratch your head at that you wonder is that the right way to understand this passage? You just need to turn to the New Testament and you'll see that the Apostle Paul makes it very clear.

Hold your place here in Genesis. I'd like you to turn over to the book of Romans. Of course we're going to Romans. We always go to Romans when we can. In Romans chapter 9 Paul actually quotes from Genesis chapter 21.

He says beginning in the middle of verse 6 not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring.

There's that terminology again. But, and here he's quoting Genesis 21, through Isaac shall your offspring be named. This means, now he's going to explain exactly what this means.

What does God mean by that? This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted, reckoned, considered to be offspring.

[24 : 49] For this is what the promise said, about this time next year I'll return, and Sarah shall have a son. And not only so, and now he's going to give an example from the next generation, and not only so, but also, when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works, but because of him who calls, she was told the elder will serve the younger.

In other words, the apostle Paul reflects back on the story from Genesis chapter 21, and he says, that is sure evidence, that is sure proof that God does not count as the children of God, those who are perhaps physically a part of the covenant people, he does not necessarily automatically count them to be children of God, heirs of the promise, simply because they have a physical claim.

God counts as his children, as his offspring, only those who are children of the promise.

It was Isaac who was a child of promise, and not Ishmael. It was Jacob who was a child of promise, and not Esau. And so it's very clear, looking back on Genesis chapter 21, that when God makes this statement in Genesis chapter 21, he is excluding Ishmael from the covenant people of God who possess the redemptive promises of God.

Today we would say something like, that person's not a Christian. Or if we wanted to use more Bible language, we might say, that person is not in Christ, that person is outside of Christ. We would say things like that to identify someone as a non-believer, someone outside, someone who's not received the promises of redemption.

[26 : 39] They're outside, they're not one of us. That's how we would word it today. So that I think it's extremely important for us to recognize how God continues to deal with Ishmael in this passage.

How God continues to deal with Ishmael, I believe, is a signal to us of how we ought to think about God dealing with those outside of Christ now, and then how we ought to think about, look toward them, and seek to serve them even in many ways.

Take a look at God's care and compassion towards Ishmael as the story sort of unfolds. God initially is going to address Abraham's fears and concerns, because Abraham does not want to do this.

Verse 13, I will, this is a promise, I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring. Now, initially, that right there tells you automatically that God's not going to abandon Ishmael at all, because for Ishmael to be made into a nation, Ishmael cannot perish in the wilderness.

He can't. For Ishmael to be made into a nation, he's going to have to grow up to be an adult and get married and have many children, and those children will have to have many children. He will have to be prosperous in some sort of way in order for these things to happen.

[27:59] God is telling Abraham, I'm not going to abandon Ishmael. Sure, he doesn't receive the covenant promises. He's not a part of the redemptive people of God. But I'm not abandoning him entirely.

I'm not leaving him out there to just wither and perish. No, that's not what I'm doing. Now, that should not come as a surprise to Abraham. He should know that already.

Turn back a page or two in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 17. Abraham is initially told here, this is after chapter 16, which means that Ishmael has already been born.

Abraham has a son, but now Abraham is told, no, Sarah is going to have a son, and that son is the one who will be counted as offspring. Verse 17.

Abraham fell on his face and laughed. There's that word again to himself. Shall a child be born to a man who is 100 years old? Shall Sarah, who is 90 years old, bear a child? And Abraham said to God, Oh, that Ishmael might live before you.

[29:03] Just count Ishmael. I have a son. I love my son. Just give the promises to Ishmael that Ishmael might live before you. To which God responds, no.

No. But Sarah, your wife, shall bear you a son and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him.

Now, as for Ishmael, I have heard you. Behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father 12 princes and I will make him into a great nation.

But I'll establish my covenant with Isaac. In other words, the covenant goes to Isaac. But I've not forgotten about Ishmael. I've not abandoned him.

He's not being left out to die. He's not being fully cast out in any sort of way. I'll make him into a nation. Again, the promise reiterated now in chapter 21.

[30:03] Don't worry, Abraham. Do what she says. I will protect him. I will take care of him. He will prosper. He will multiply. He will become a great nation.

I guarantee it, Abraham. It's going to happen. And so Abraham responds in verse 14. He rises early in the morning. Says he took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar.

Put it on her shoulder. Now this phrase is confusing along with the child because it sounds as if he's putting the child on her shoulder as well as if the child's an infant. But we know he's not. We know he's not.

He's a young teenager. But he gives her the child. He hands over the child to her as if to say. He's yours alone now. You're in charge of him.

That's the language. And he sent her away. And she departed and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. Now I don't know why Abraham does things in exactly this particular way.

[31 : 03] I don't know why Abraham merely gives her some bread and a skin of water if he's so concerned about the life of his son. That's not enough to last. That's not enough. That's not enough to help them to survive for a long time in the wilderness.

A lot of people have speculated Abraham's wealthy. Why didn't he give her a few donkeys and load them down with supplies and say on your way you're provided for and taken care of. I don't know why he doesn't do that.

You can speculate and come up with a number of reasons. Maybe Abraham's just exasperated and just sends him off as quickly as he can because he doesn't want to think about it. He doesn't want to deal with it. Probably not. He gets up early in the morning to make provisions.

It may be that Abraham, some have speculated, he doesn't give them a lot of supplies because he doesn't want them to wander too far. He wants them to stay close. Maybe they don't go far.

They're in Beersheba. That's not far. They'll get a little bit further later down in the passage. But maybe. It could be that Abraham is trusting in God. That he doesn't see the need to give them a lot because God's already said he's going to care for them and perhaps he's trusting in the Lord.

[32 : 05] We have no idea why he does things this way. But this is what he does. He gives them a little bit of water. He gives them some bread and he sends them on their way. Which would leave us as a reader to wonder how in the world are they going to survive like this?

What is God going to do to care for them and protect him? In all of verses 15 through 21 are about God's care and provision for Hagar and Ishmael.

That's what that entire paragraph is about. It's all about how God does step in. He does what he says he would do and he takes care even of this child who is outside of the covenant people of God.

Let's read it again. I know we've already read it, but let's read through. When the water in the skin was gone, obviously it's not going to last long. She put the child under one of the bushes. Now apparently, for whatever reason, at this point in time, Ishmael is not in good health.

We don't know how long they've been wandering around. We don't know how long it took for the water to run out. We have no idea, but at this point in time, he's weak enough that she has to put him under a bush, that is to give him some sort of shade so he's not just out in the sun.

[33 : 16] And in her eyes, he's going to die. He's a goner. She went and sat down opposite him a good way off about the distance of a bow shot, for she said, let me not look on the death of the child.

And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy. And the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, what troubles you, Hagar?

Seems like a silly question, right? You know, I mean, you're you're starving and you you don't have anything to drink. Your son's lying under a bush over there. He's dying because he doesn't have anything to eat or drink. What's wrong, Hagar? But God's reaching out to her.

God's speaking to her. What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Now, everything that's happening here in some way parallels and mirrors what happens in chapter 16, where Sarah is so mean to Hagar that Hagar runs out into the wilderness on her own.

She's pregnant. She runs out in the wilderness. But there is Hagar is in the wilderness. God intervenes. He comes. But he speaks to Hagar. His concern and care is all about Hagar.

[34:30] Here, the emphasis shifts. Yes, the angel of God speaks to Hagar. But the emphasis, the focus is on the boy. Why? Because God promised to take care of the boy.

He promised to take care of Ishmael. So he says, I've heard the cry of the boy. Not, I heard you weeping, Hagar. Obviously, he did. He hears everything. But he's saying, I'm responding because I heard the boy earlier crying out.

But I've heard him. I'm coming. I will take care of you. Up, lift up the boy. Hold him fast in your hand for I will make him into a great nation.

There's the promise again, but this time given to Hagar. Then, and here's his provision. Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water and she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.

And God was with the boy and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran. That's just south of Beersheba where they are now. He lived in the wilderness of Paran.

[35:30] His mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. That's not surprising because she's from Egypt. And Egypt is nearby. She goes. She gets him a wife. And that's the end of it. Now, Ishmael disappears.

But for a short genealogy in chapter 25, he not only disappears from Genesis, he disappears from the Old Testament altogether. He's gone. He's out of sight.

We see his descendants, but never referred to as the descendants of Ishmael. We see his descendants here and there, but never again is this particular Ishmael mentioned in the Old Testament.

He's gone from the scene. Why? Because God's dealings are not mainly with Ishmael. Because God has chosen Isaac and God has given the promises and passed the promises on to Isaac.

And yet, before Ishmael disappears from the scene, God would have Abraham know, and because he put it in the scriptures, he would have us know that he does have care and he does have concern for Ishmael himself.

[36:33] And I think that that remains true today. The vast majority of people living in the world today are lost. They are without hope. They are outside of Christ. They are living contrary to the will of God.

They do not belong to the people of God. They do not have the covenant promises. What does that mean? They are abandoned entirely? No. Every breath that is breathed is a gift given from God, even among those who do not know him.

Every good and perfect gift, James tells us, comes from above. Every good and perfect gift. Every good thing that we receive.

Every good thing that anybody on the earth receives. Be it physical wealth, be it health, be it some other blessing, family blessings, good relationships, a good job, a life that is enjoyed.

All of those abundant blessings come from God himself. There is nothing that comes to any person on the face of the planet that is good and enjoyable that does not come from the gracious hand of God.

[37 : 42] God, which means that we in our minds need to account for a grace that comes from God that is not necessarily saving grace. We need to account in our beliefs and in our theology, we need to account for a massive, gracious giving of God even toward those outside of Christ.

It does not give them the hope of eternal life. It does not rescue them from their sins. But there is great good that God and His abundant goodness and kindness gives out to the world.

He doesn't give it in equal measure to all people. He doesn't. We live in a sinful, fallen world and there are unbelievable amounts of sin and pain that exist in the world. But every time someone succeeds, every time someone eats a meal, every time someone takes a breath, God is breathing out grace into their lives.

Always. And for Ishmael, ultimately, that he was allowed to live and prosper and grow into a great nation means that his descendants were able to live and last to a time when the saving grace of God was no longer limited in its scope to the chosen descendants of Abraham, but to a time where the saving grace of God spread out far and wide.

And even those who are descended from Ishmael now might be brought into the covenant people of God. I say that because there is one more place in the New Testament where the Apostle Paul refers back to Genesis chapter 21.

[39 : 29] And I don't want us to spend a lot of time there because there are some details in it that are that are somewhat confusing. But I do want you to look in Galatians chapter four at how Paul reflects back on again.

This story in Genesis chapter 21. This time he doesn't look back upon it to draw conclusions about the doctrine of election or about. The limits of the covenant people.

No, he looks back for another reason. Galatians chapter four, verse 22. It is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman, one by a free woman.

But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. Now, that's a very important distinction that Paul is making. He's saying that when Abraham was able to impregnate Hagar, all that was just normal fleshly behavior.

That's all it was. Was Abraham trying, trying to obtain God's good promises by his own ability, by his own works and his own effort?

[40 : 41] That's all it was. Just a product of the flesh. While the son of the free woman, Isaac, that was miraculous. That was God's doing. He was born through promise, not through Abraham's efforts.

And then he says, now, this may be interpreted allegorically, which I think means that he says, now, we can apply this to ourselves in this sort of way. He says that these women are two covenants.

And then he's going to take a turn that is shocking if you're. If you're familiar with the Old Testament, especially if you're a Jewish person in Paul's day reading this, he says, you can understand these two women.

Kind of a spiritual, allegorical kind of way. There are two covenants. One's from Mount Sinai. OK, good. We expect that. Isaac, he's from Sinai, right? I mean, that's where the law of Moses is given.

No. One is from Mount Sinai bearing children for slavery. She's Hagar. Wait, what? The law of Moses given at Mount Sinai is now associated with Hagar?

[41 : 43] Why? Now, Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia. She corresponds to the present Jerusalem. That's where it goes really off the rails. Now Paul is saying, oh, by the way, those who are in slavery.

Yeah, it's the present Jerusalem. It's Paul's fellow Jewish kinsmen for whom he mourns in the book of Romans because the vast majority of them are outside of Christ and therefore not receiving the covenant promises.

Everything is suddenly turned on its head now. Those whom you would expect, descendants of Isaac even, they're in slavery, Paul says.

They are now the children of the slave woman. But, he says, the Jerusalem above is free and she is our mother. Verse 28, now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

That may not seem to be significant to you until you realize that the book of Galatians is written to a predominantly Gentile audience. Gentiles, that is, not descendants of Abraham, especially not descendants of Abraham through Isaac or through Jacob.

[42 : 59] People outside the covenant promises in any way that we might expect. Now, you brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.

You see, now that Christ has come, now that the ultimate offspring has come, now the grace of God is flowing out in all sorts of directions, saving people from every tongue, every tribe, every nation, including the descendants of Ishmael.

Now, this is good news. It's good news because God gives abundant, common grace even to people who are outside the covenant.

And His grace is so abundant, His grace is so great, that now in the new covenant age, He even draws those who are initially outside the covenant into the covenant and saves them by the blood of His own Son.

Let me offer you two bits of application before we close, drawn from those two realities. First point is that you should always and at all times be praying for your non-believing relatives and friends that God would bless them.

[44 : 14] You should not come to the conclusion that, oh, they don't know Jesus? I guess, you know, whatever. No. Just as Abraham was greatly concerned for this son that he knew would not inherit the covenant promises, so I would be greatly concerned for the daily welfare of those who do not belong to Christ.

We ought to constantly be coming to God and praying and asking Him to bless them, to do good to them, to protect them, to guide them, to do whatever is necessary to keep them safe in this sinful, fallen world.

We should be those who are mediating and interceding on behalf of all the lost people that are around us. We should never give up praying for good things to come for our neighbors. Never.

Because God's grace is abundant and His common grace comes to everyone. And the second point of application is more specific and that is that we ought to be praying specifically for their salvation.

We ought to be praying that those who are outside the covenant, those who do not know Christ and have not yet trusted in Him, we ought to be praying that God would bring them in.

[45 : 28] Because God is always doing the unexpected. He is always about the business of saving those that we would never expect Him to save. Because look at the ones, just even consider Abraham's very own descendants.

He doesn't choose Ishmael the oldest. He picks Isaac the little brother. He doesn't choose Esau, the one who is strong and who has the right initially to receive the covenant promises.

No, he chooses Jacob the deceiver. On and on you go through the history of God's dealings with humanity. And He keeps doing the unexpected.

He keeps bringing into the fold those that we would never expect to be brought into the fold. Consider the ministry of Jesus. Consider the fact that He didn't go and preach to the religious elite.

They were His enemies. They were at odds with Him. He keeps going to poor people. He keeps even going to Gentiles. Roman soldiers, for goodness sake, and proclaiming to them the gospel.

[46 : 31] Is He doing these kinds of things? Because God saves people that we would never expect Him to save. Which means that we should never stop praying for those that we know that are outside of Christ.

If God should so move in their hearts and draw them to Himself so that they might believe in Him, it will not matter what they have done.

It will not matter what they have said. It will not matter anything that lies behind them. But if they would trust in Christ, they would be saved. It's the good news.

It's the good news of the abundance of God's grace even in the life of the son of the slave woman and His descendants. Let's pray. Amen. Amen.