

Lenten Devotional March 14, 2021

Scripture

Galatians 4:21-5:1

21 Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law? 22 For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman. 23 One, the child of the slave, was born according to the flesh; the other, the child of the free woman, was born through the promise. 24 Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. 25 Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia[a] and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. 26 But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother. 27 For it is written, "Rejoice, you childless one, you who bear no children, burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs; for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than the children of the one who is married."

28 Now you,[b] my friends,[c] are children of the promise, like Isaac. 29 But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. 30 But what does the scripture say? "Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman." 31 So then, friends,[d] we are children, not of the slave but of the free woman. 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Devotional

The Rev. Dr. Errol L. Connor '99

How foolish! Who has bewitched you? Do you not know you have abandoned the truth for a lie? But, like a good neighbor, friend, or pastor, the Apostle Paul reprimands and reminds us all that "we are children, not of the slave but of the free woman" (Gal. 4:31).

Abraham had two sons, one by the slave and one by the free woman. The metaphor of the slave women (Hagar) represents all misguided human efforts to help in the fulfillment of the promise of God. The free woman (Sarah) represents the faith that takes God at God's word and waits for the promise. Through Abraham and in Jesus, we are children, not of the slave but of the free woman.

It is foolish to think that one can be saved by works of the law when Christ Jesus died to save sinners. Yes, it is true that faith without works is dead; however, works apart from faith are a dead end. We become slaves to the law because we are prisoners of sin without Christ. We cannot be made perfect by our own human efforts. No matter how well we keep the law, observe tradition, or slavishly follow religious customs. No one is made right with God by obeying the law but by believing in Jesus. *All self dependence is but vain. Christ doth our cornerstone remain.* ". . . Justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Rom. 5:1).

So it is true, we are children, not of the slave but of the free woman. As such, we are recipients of grace. Grace means gift: that which we do not deserve, that for which no price nor labor is required. By grace we are saved through faith . . . not of works . . . it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9). That's the Promise of the Father: freedom in Christ and empowerment through the Spirit. Child of God, child of the promise, may you ever stand in the grace where Christ makes free.

Prayer

“Abba!” Father!” Beyond the law, I see your grace in the glory of the Cross. It’s finished! Yes, the work is done through Christ, your only Son. And so, I have started on that road of freedom, faith and love. Lord, help me rest, yet daily run the race, and rise with Christ above. Amen!