

# 5. Children of Freedom

## Galatians 3:26-5:1

### Born into Slavery

If you were 'born with a silver spoon in your mouth', your experience of life is very different to someone who was 'born on the wrong side of the tracks.' They're both familiar (though dated) expressions that reflect on a person's 'station in life' - again a dated term. Maybe these days in Australia it just doesn't matter so much *where a person came from* in terms of their social standing. (Or maybe it does?) In any case, it mattered to the Jews. In this section, Paul calls for some radical re-thinking. Things are both worse than they thought ... and better than they thought. And that's true for us too - no matter which side of the tracks we were born on! Let's see how.

### Get Ready...

Before you read, here's some quick prep. This is a passage that starts off with Paul saying "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Clearly, he means *all of you, Jewish or Gentile Christian*. Distinctions no longer matter. There's a subtle line of argument that flows through 4:1-11 - look for it as you read. Paul will often use "we" to refer to himself and the Jewish Christians, and "you" in reference to the Gentile converts. When you notice this, it helps make sense of what he's saying...

for example - 4:3 "So also when *we* were children *we* were in slavery under...  
4:8 "Formerly when *you* did not know God *you* were slaves to those..."

### Now read Galatians 3:26- 4:20.

1. The Jewish Christians might be heirs of the one who owns the farm, but what have they been like so far? (v1-3)
2. How does this compare with the prior situation of the gentiles? (v8)
3. What were the Jews enslaved to? (v3) And the gentiles? (Same word, v 9)
4. What has God done for those under the law, and how? (v4-5)
5. What about 'you gentiles'? (v6) And how?

See the point? For both the Jew and the gentile Christian, God has turned them from slaves into sons. Jews were slaves to the 'basic principles of the world' expressed in the law - while the gentiles were slaves to the 'basic principles' of idolatry. They were both slaves. Now, they're both sons! The old distinctions have disappeared. There is no privileged class... as Paul says, there's neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus!



What types of people does our church bring together as a family that wouldn't usually be together?

Are we working hard enough to make sure there's no 'elitism' in our church?



### **From Slavery to Freedom ... to slavery again**

Tragically, the Galatian gentiles are at risk of becoming slaves all over again.

6. What is Paul's warning in verse 9 to 11? What's the issue?

What a tragedy it would be if the Galatians became slaves again! All they had to do was keep listening to the Jewish Christians who were trying to impose all kinds of rules and regulations and holy day observances. If they are led astray like this, Paul is afraid his ministry to them has been in vain!

### **Hot Potato...**

"Christians would demonstrate the reality of the gospel better if we stopped celebrating Christmas and Easter." Discuss.



### **A Personal Note**

Paul is deeply disturbed by what's happening in Galatia. Whereas once they cared for him in his illness and welcomed him like an angel, now things are different. Note the personal, emotional language Paul uses in...

v 11

v12

v16

v19

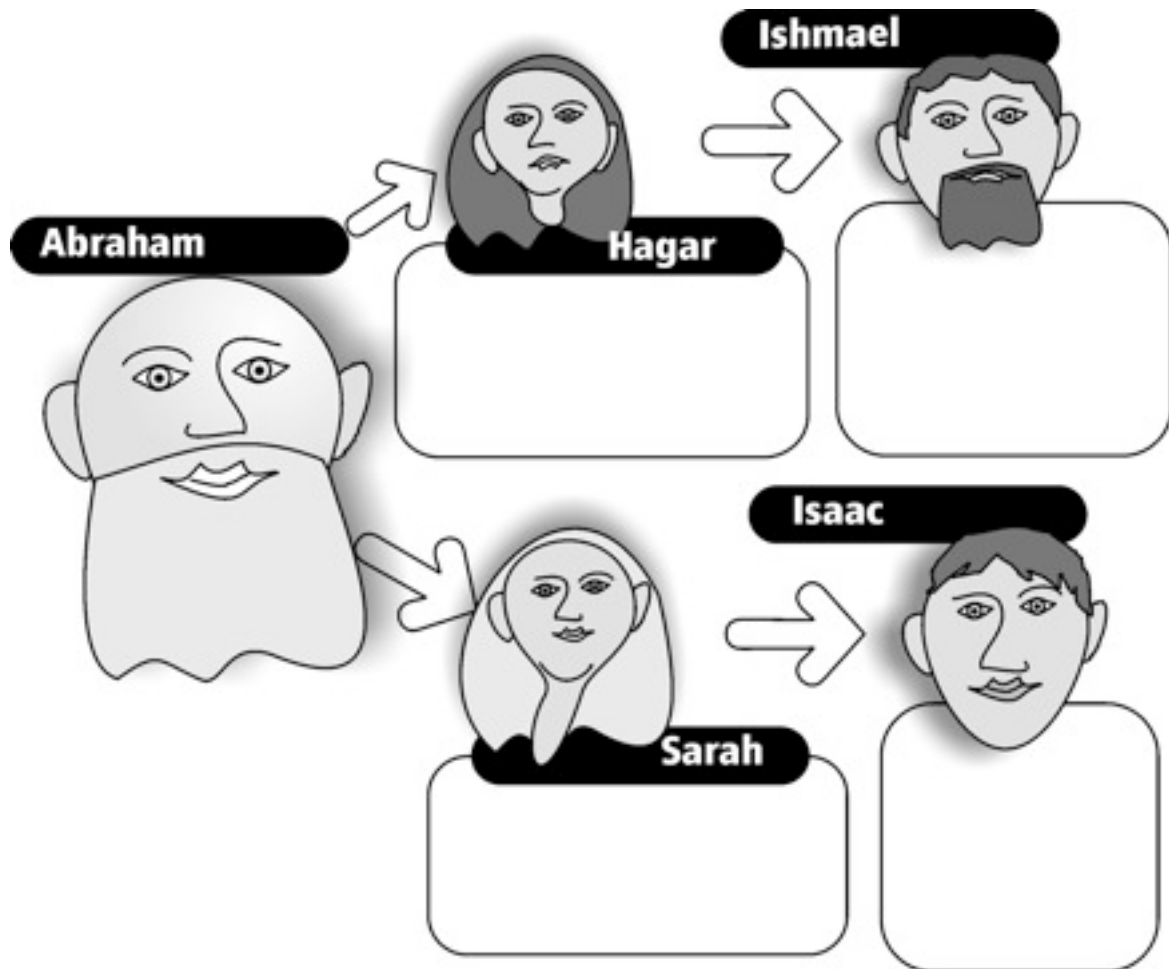
v20

Paul really cares! If they turn back to the law, they are losing their freedom in Christ. How much do you care about this issue?

7. What would Paul say about you? Does your life as a Christian reflect the fact that you're not God's slave, but God's child? How?

### A new angle on an old story...

8. Paul sees parallels between the old testament story of Abraham and the present situation of the Galatians. You can read the details for yourself in Genesis 16 sometime. To cut a long story short, Abraham and his wife Sarah had been unable to conceive, so Sarah gave her husband a slave girl, Hagar, to start a family from. Hagar the slave gave birth to Ishmael. But God's promise to give Abraham a family wasn't intended to be fulfilled that way. Finally, Sarah, though thought to be infertile, gave birth to Isaac... the child of promise. And through the line of Isaac came the whole nation of Israel. But Paul gives the story an interesting twist.



### Read through Galatians 4:21-31, and put these descriptions in the boxes with the right characters in Paul's "figurative" retelling of the story...

Slave woman, free woman, son born in the ordinary way, son born of promise, covenant from Sinai (law), slaves, Hagar, present Jerusalem, Jerusalem above, free, born of the power of the Spirit, us.

Which person represents us (Christians)?

Which person represents the Jews? (Or Judaizing Christians?)

9. How does the way Ishmael treated Isaac illustrate the way Christians can expect to be treated by those who are slaves to law? (Why do you think this is?)

10. What does the future hold for the “present Jerusalem”?



11. Read 5:1. This is the practical application Paul has been heading for in telling the story of Hagar and Sarah. If we're FREE, we need to LIVE LIKE IT - and appreciate our freedom enough to not let ourselves be dragged back into a form of legalistic, religious, holy-day observing slavery. What examples of “slavery” should we watch out for today?