

## Genesis, part 49 – How to Live the Abundant Christian Life Correctly (Genesis 21:1-21)

#1 – We’ve been “born again” by the Spirit of God

#2 – God has forgiven our sins

#3 – We have assurance of eternal life

#4 – We have a personal relationship with God

#5 – God the Holy Spirit indwells us

#6 – We live a transformed earthly life

“I came that they [Christians] might have life – and that they might have it abundantly.” John 10:10b

“... Sarah’s womb was dead ...” Romans 4:19

“... Abraham’s body was also as good as dead since he was one hundred years old ...” Romans 4:19

“Now the LORD took note of Sarah just as He had said and the LORD did for Sarah just as He had promised.” Genesis 21:1

“So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age – at the appointed time that God had promised him.” Genesis 21:2

“And Abraham called the name of his son whom Sarah bore to him ‘Isaac.’ And when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, just as God had commanded.” Genesis 21:3, 4

“Now Abraham was one hundred years old when Isaac was born to him.” Genesis 21:5

“And Sarah said, ‘God has brought laughter to me; for everyone who hears about this will laugh with me. For who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.’” Genesis 21:6, 7

“And the child [Isaac] grew and was weaned and Abraham held a great feast on that day. But Sarah saw Hagar’s son Ishmael [who was now sixteen years old] mocking Isaac.” Genesis 21:8, 9

“Sarah had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar. So Sarah said to Abraham, ‘The LORD has kept me from having children, so please go sleep with my handmaiden; perhaps I can obtain children through her.’” Genesis 16:1, 2

“So Abraham slept with Hagar and she conceived and had a son named Ishmael.” Genesis 16:4

“So Sarah said to Abraham, ‘Throw this bondwoman and her son out; for the son of this bondwoman shall **never** share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.’” Genesis 21:10

“And this matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son [i.e., Ishmael].” Genesis 21:11

If the wife later went on to have children of her own, it was **illegal** for her to disenfranchise the handmaiden’s son and throw him out!

“It is clear, in light of the data from Nuzi, why Abraham was reluctant to agree to Sarah’s demand: it was breaking the law! And there is no doubt that Abraham would have refused to do it, had not God commanded him to.” Merrill Unger, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*

“But God said to Abraham, ‘Do not be distressed about the boy and the bondwoman. Listen to what Sarah tells you, because it will be through Isaac that your descendants will be called.’” Genesis 21:12

Here in Genesis 21, God **limits** the “Jewish people” only to **Abraham’s descendants through Isaac!**

[God] “Yet I will make the son of the bondwoman [Ishmael] into a great nation too, because he also is your offspring.” Genesis 21:13

“So Abraham rose early the next morning, and took bread, and a skin of water, and put it on Hagar’s shoulder. Then he sent her away with the boy. So she went on her way and wandered in the desert around Beersheba.” Genesis 21:14

“And when all the water was used up, Hagar put Ishmael under some shrubs. Then she went and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she said: ‘I cannot bear to watch the boy die.’ And she began to sob.” Genesis 21:15, 16

“And God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, ‘What is ailing you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad. Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I **will** make him into a great nation.’” Genesis 21:17, 18

“Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink.” Genesis 21:19

“And God was with Ishmael as he grew up and he lived in the desert and became an archer. And his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.” Genesis 21:20

**Issue** = Christians there [in the Galatian church] were relying on human works:

- Not to **get** saved
- But to live the Christian life once they **were** saved

False teachers were telling the Galatian Christians:

“Yes – we get saved by faith in Jesus alone, **completely apart from human works**. But – once we **are saved** – living the “abundant Christian life” that Jesus promised is based on doing **religious human work**.”

“We get saved **by faith** – but we live the Christian life **by works**.”

“Now that you have come to know God by faith, how is it that you are turning back to those weak and worthless things [human works] to which you were once enslaved? . . . You observe special days and weeks and months and years! I fear for you, lest I have labored over you in vain.” Galatians 4:9-11

“For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision or uncircumcision has any value [i.e., when it comes to living the abundant Christian life].” Galatians 5:6a

Human works cannot and do not produce the “abundant Christian life.”

“The only thing that counts is faith . . .” Galatians 5:6b

**Paul:** “What produces the ‘abundant Christian life’ is relying on the Holy Spirit’s power and not our own – and **I told you this when I was there!**”

“You were running well; who has hindered you from obeying the truth? Because this approach [to Christian living] did not come from Him who calls you [i.e., God].” Galatians 5:7, 8

“For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman [Hagar] and one by the free woman [Sarah]. Abraham’s son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh [as a result of human works], but his son by the free woman was born in accordance with God’s promise [as a result of relying on God].” Galatians 4:22, 23

“Now these things [Genesis 21] contain an allegory, for the two women represent God’s two covenants.” Galatians 4:24

**Hagar and Ishmael** stand for the **Mosaic Covenant** (Mt. Sinai) that is **based on human works**.

This covenant is slavery/bondage a “**death trap.**”

**Sarah and Isaac** stand for the **covenant that Jesus established** (on the cross) that is **NOT** based on human works – but on our relying on Christ by faith – a covenant of “**freedom.**”

“For what the Mosaic Law **could not do** [because it is based on human works] **God did**, by sending His own Son. He [the Lord Jesus Christ] made me free from the [Mosaic] Law of sin and death.” Romans 8:3, 2

“And what does the Scripture say? [Genesis 21] ‘Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will not share in the inheritance of the free woman’s son.’” Galatians 4:30

God rejects **ALL** “human works” systems

He **only accepts** “relying on God by faith” systems

What God is teaching us in Galatians 4 is that:

- Not only has He rejected “human works” as the way **to be saved** . . .
- He has also rejected it as the way we are to live **once we are saved!**

“Human works” has **no place whatsoever** in God’s spiritual operating system.

“Casting Hagar out” in Genesis 21 is meant – symbolically – to **make sure** we understand this!

### **So What?**

It is my observation – that most Christians feel their Christian life is pretty much a failure.

Most Christians experience very little of the peace, joy, power over sin, and spiritual victory that Jesus says He came to give us.

After years of struggling and losing, many of us have simply given up – assuming that there is something wrong with **US!**

In most cases, the problem is that we were taught to live the Christian life **incorrectly!**

Trying to live it by “**religious human works**” – just like the Galatians were trying to do.

The Christian life –lived correctly – is a **supernatural life!**

The Christian life **begins** with relying on God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

The Christian life **ends** by relying on God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.

If the Christian life **begins** and **ends** this way – why would God change systems in the middle?

God has to do it **ALL** for us in salvation.

God has to do it **ALL** for us in going to heaven.

God has to do it **ALL** for us in living the abundant Christian life.

We do this by relying on the Holy Spirit to be our “electricity”!

The “abundant Christian life” is possible – or Jesus wouldn’t have said it was.

It’s just that we have to live it **correctly!**