

Galatians Grace to the Barren Bible Study – Galatians 4:21-31

Paul has taught the formerly pagan Galatian Christians that they were fully “children of Abraham” the moment they believed in Christ (3:7; 4:7). The false teachers, on the other hand, taught the Galatians that they had to submit to all the Mosaic legislation, including circumcision, in order to be “children of Abraham.” Now Paul uses the illustration of Abraham’s two sons—Ishmael and Isaac—to make his point in a final, dramatic way. The basic teaching is that the gospel not only makes absolutely anyone a child of God, but that the most proud, moral, and religiously “able” often are the ones left out of God’s family. The gospel reverses the world’s values.

READ GALATIANS 4:21-31

1. In verse 21, what does it mean to want to be “under the law”? (Compare with 4:4-5 and 5:16-20.)

2. Why do you think Paul can say that those under the law don’t really listen to what the law says?

3. Read the story behind this passage in Genesis 16:1-4; 18:10-14; 21:1-10. How were the births of these two sons different (v. 23)?

4. What does Paul say each birth/mother represents (vv. 24-26)? Why? You could make a comparison chart together as a group

5. The residents of Jerusalem would regard Sarah as their mother and Hagar as the mother of the Gentiles. Why does Paul reverse things? How does this bolster his argument in 3:7 and 4:7-9?

6. Read verse 27. What does Paul imply by quoting Isaiah 54:1? How does Sarah serve as an encouraging picture to all who consider themselves to have failed or been disappointed?

7. Take what you’ve learned in this passage and answer these questions: Why do religious people need the gospel? What do you think is meant by a religious person?

Why do irreligious people need the gospel (people who feel that they don’t need God)?

Why do religious people persecute the gospel-bearers? (Think of the Jewish leaders in Jesus’ day)