I think that there comes a time in many teenager’s lives when they ask the question – how could you be my mother?

We have nothing in common. You hate my music, my clothes, my friends, my causes. You don’t get me and I sure don’t get you – how could you ever be my mother?

So, you ferret around the family filing cabinet – and there it is in black and white – a birth certificate proving that yes – she is indeed your mother.

And then you notice it – you have her eyes and nose. And yes – you do some of the very things she does that annoy you – truth is – she is your momma.

But what about spiritually – how do you know who your spiritual momma is?

That is the question Paul addresses in our passage this morning.

So far in Galatians, we have seen that Paul planted the churches of Galatia on his first missionary journey.

He went in to those cities – cosmopolitan melting pots filled with every worldview imaginable – and he preached Christ and Him crucified and nothing else.

Jews and Gentiles listened – trusted the gospel – and were wonderfully converted.

But, soon after he left, some men who he calls agitators – Judaisers – Jews who called themselves Christians turned up teaching the Galatians that if they wanted all the
blessings available, if they truly wanted to please God, if they wanted to be true sons of Abraham – faith alone was not enough – they needed to keep the Torah – the Jewish Law.

And they backed it up with a few spurious proof texts and a ton of tradition.

The moment word of this reached Paul he wrote back to the Galatians.

The point of this letter is clear.

There is – No Other Gospel!

The gospel Paul shared with them – faith alone – this is the only gospel – the only way of salvation and anything else is accursed.

But, what does this mean?

One trendy fad in recent years has been to talk about – Gospel Mathematics.

It usually goes something like this:

**Jesus + Anything = Nothing**

**Jesus + Nothing = Everything**

In one sense that is way too simplistic.

But, in terms of salvation – it is actually a pretty good summary.

The gospel teaches us that if we add anything to salvation by Jesus alone then we have nothing – no salvation.

But, trust Jesus alone to save you – and you inherit everything.

The book of Galatians focusses our minds in particular on this first statement.

**Jesus + Anything = Nothing**

If you add anything to salvation:

*By Grace Alone*

*Through Faith Alone*

*Based on the completed work of Christ Alone*

You destroy the gospel and end up enslaved.

Any gospel that teaches Jesus plus anything – is a false gospel.

This was the danger that had crept into the church in Galatia.
Today we finish Paul’s *fourth* and longest point in this book:

**The Fruit of Heresy – Bondage not Freedom**

3:19-4:31

Christ came to set the captives free.

To go back to the Law is to go back to bondage – to go back to slavery.

Instead he calls on us all to press on to the freedom of life in Christ.

We have already seen that:

**In Christ, we are freed from the bondage of:**

- Hopelessness 3:19-29
- Deception 4:1-20

This morning we look at the fact that:

**In Christ, we are freed from the bondage of:**

- Tradition 4:21-31

Tradition is a teaching – that becomes so ingrained, so entrenched it is just taken as fact – but in reality you can’t defend it from Scripture.

And when that tradition teaches something other than the gospel – we find ourselves in bondage to tradition.

Most heresies have at least a foot in tradition. Most traditions add to the gospel of faith alone.

Traditions like – the sacraments save – Mary can help you get to heaven – baptism in water actually saves you.

The Jews had a tradition that God sent the Law to them via angels to show that they were the promised people and that by keeping the Law they would please God.

Paul has been fighting this tradition since he was miraculously saved.

It leads to bondage. It leads to destruction.

There are many lies that lead you from the true path to the false gospel – but perhaps the most seductive lie comes when the true gospel is mixed with just enough deception to move the needle from truth to lie.

These lies that have some truth, some Bible mixed with error – often sound so right that they get embedded as tradition – and they become incredibly dangerous to the gospel.
In this case – the Jews had a tradition that said:

**If you want to be a son of the Father – keep the Law.**

Keeping the Law showed you were a true son of God.

Now, if I were seeking to attack that tradition – I think I would say something like:

**If you want to be a son of the Father – have faith.**

But that is not the way Paul attacks this tradition. In our passage this morning Paul says this:

**If you want to be a son of the Father – choose your momma wisely.**

**If you want to be a son of the Father – choose your momma wisely.**

Huh!

Let’s be frank here – this is almost certainly not the argument we expected.

And I also have to say – it is not the easiest argument to get your head around.

When this passage was read you probably wondered what on earth was Paul saying.

In fact, many have called our passage this morning the hardest passage in the New Testament.

However you cut it – it is a tough passage.

So, for any visitors here this morning – I apologise – profusely.

You have come on a week when we are dealing with some difficult verses – but I trust it will become clearer as we work through this passage.

What we will see is that Paul outlines his message through two points.

**Two Families**

**Two Choices**

First – look with me as Paul unpacks the tale of Two Families in verses 21-27.

Galatians 4:21:

> Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?

The Judaisers were telling Christians – to be a true son of God you have to be under the Law.
Paul says – so you want to be under the Law, do you? Well, have you really listened to it? Because if you did, you would realize that the Law itself says that the true heirs are those who trust the way of promise not the way of works.

Paul makes it clear that the only way you can think the Law is necessary for salvation is through tradition – not the Bible?

From the moment they were born the parents of a Jewish child stood over their cribs and told them:

- Blessed are you my child.
- You are the chosen of God.
- Abraham is your father.
- One day you will thank God you are not a Gentile or a slave.
- One day you will thank God for giving you His Law.

This concept that the Jews are the chosen of God because they received the Law was so ingrained in them it was beyond discussion.

It is like attacking the notion that the sun will come up tomorrow.

But, the gospel of Jesus had given him fresh eyes – he knew the truth and he wanted to proclaim it.

Throughout Galatians Paul has been at pains to show that the Law itself – the Old Testament – does not teach this.

In chapter 2 he says – we Jews of all people should know this.

Then he argues this from the Law. In chapter 3 – he points out that Abraham was said to be righteous not because he had the Law – but because he had faith.

He then pointed out that the Scriptures tell us that promise to Abraham came before the giving of the Law – so the Law could not nullify the promise.

Now in our passage, he again asks us to turn to the Law – to the Old Testament.

It is not a passage I would ever think to go to in defending a gospel of faith alone.

What we will read is not an argument I would ever think to make.

But once you see it – you realise – wow it is there – you will be amazed at the plan of God.

It seems Paul went to this passage because Abraham played a prominent part in the Judaiser’s argument.
He is mentioned eight times in this book – and it seems the Judaisers were adamant that he was their father.

They were saying – salvation comes from being a son of Abraham – and to be a son – you need to keep the Law.

Here Paul says – true – you do need to be a son of Abraham – but be careful which son keeping the Law makes you.

Paul says seeking salvation through the Law – does make you a son of Abraham – but it makes you a son in the line of Ishmael not Isaac.

He makes his argument from the events surrounding the births of Abraham’s first two sons.

This is a crucial event – but an often overlooked event.

I suspect the few times this event is considered or preached on – it is merely treated as a morality tale.

Trust God, wait for the miracle, don’t give in to the temptations of the flesh.

Paul says – no. God designed the very events of this situation to teach the Jews and us a crucial lesson.

The events surrounding the birth of these sons – teach us that every man woman and child ever born are actually sons of Abraham.

But the question is which son? And the answer to that depends on who your momma is.

The basic story is fairly clear. It deals with Abraham and his family.

Verse 22:

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman.
Here is the family tree of Abraham’s first two sons.

It might look straightforward – I assure you – it is not.

Now, I used to think I had the world’s most boring family tree.

Then after my grandmother died, I found a family tree in her effects.

Supposedly I am distantly related to the famous preacher Charles Spurgeon through my mother’s side of the family.

And, years after my father died I found out I have a half-brother through my father.

Who knows what else lurks in my family tree?

On my wife Dena’s side she has PT Barnum as a part of her family tree and there are whispers about a Native American Indian wife somewhere in there a few generations back.

But, I can tell you our family trees have nothing on the family tree of Abraham.

His is one messed up family. We can blame many of the world’s conflicts even today on Abraham’s messed up family tree.

But, let me remind the key to it all is the story of his first two sons – Isaac and Ishmael.

Depending on who you listen to – these sons led to the Jews and the Gentiles, the Jews and the Muslims – or to Christians and everyone else.

What does the Bible say?
One of the most significant passages in the Bible is Genesis 15:1–6 – the Abrahamic Covenant – would you turn there with me:

After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” And [Abraham] believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

A little context.

Back in Genesis 12 – God had called Abraham and told him that he would become a great nation.

Childless Abraham would have a son and from him would come a great nation.

Abraham was seventy then. His wife Sarah was sixty.

Fifteen years go past – no child. Abraham is around eighty-five and Sarah is seventy-five.

In those days – people lived longer – but even accounting for that – neither is a spring chicken.

Sarah’s biological clock was nearing or past midnight.

But now God appeared again and explicitly promises – you shall have a son – a biological son – and this son shall be your heir – and Abraham believed this promise that God would do the impossible.

Abraham entered into this covenant – by faith.

But his wife Sarah – reasoned like this.

I am too old to bear a son – God promised a son to Abraham.

So let’s adopt!

No. She did something else.

She reasoned the only way this can happen is for me to give my young slave girl Hagar to Abraham as a surrogate and he can bear a son through her and this son will be the heir.
Ladies – there are many ways you want to imitate Sarah – can I make it clear – this is NOT one of them.

But the point is – Sarah and Abraham decided to take matters into their own hands – they made it happen.

The result was Ishmael.

But, forward another thirteen years. Abraham is ninety-nine – Sarah is eighty-nine – Ishmael is thirteen.

God appears again and says this. Genesis 17:16:

   I will bless Sarah, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.

Abraham the great man of faith heard this – fell on his face and laughed. I’ve heard this before. And I’d be a hundred and Sarah would be ninety – you are joking aren’t you?

So Abraham says – what about Ishmael – can’t he be the son of promise – can’t he be my heir?

God says – no. Sarah will bear a son – his name will be Isaac – he will be the son of promise and My covenant will flow through him – not through Ishmael. Isaac will be your heir.

Soon after Sarah hears this promise and she laughs.

God says – why did she laugh? Is anything too hard for the Lord?

In what can only be called a miracle – Sarah falls pregnant. She bears a son in her old age – Isaac. The promise of God came to pass.

Then Sarah 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. Genesis 21:10

This seems harsh. Sarah – the whole surrogacy thing was your idea.

On minute Ishmael was the heir – now you have your precious boy you want to chuck them out into the desert!

Seems heartless.

But, Sarah knew – there is only one true heir – Isaac – not the son of the slave. The promises don’t run through him. There can’t be confusion. Cast him out!

Now – crucially – so far the Judaisers and Paul would agree.
So, where does the dispute lie?

It lies in who are the people these two branches of the family lead to and how you end up on each branch of the family tree?

The Jews of Paul’s day would say this. These two branches end up in:

**Gentiles** – the unsaved – who are not heirs to the covenant.

And in **Jews** – the saved – who are heirs to the covenant.

I do need to say that some Jews today – say these lines end in Muslims and Jews – but in Paul’s day at least – there were no Muslims so it was Gentiles and Jews.

The other important question is – how do you end up on each branch? What makes you a part of the line of Ishmael or the line of Isaac?

The Jews said it was:
Law and No Law.

God gave the Law to the descendants of Isaac – the Jews.

All the rest – the ones without the Law – they are Gentiles – dogs – outside the covenant – lost.

This is what Paul grew up believing. This is a tradition that Jews would say is unimpeachable – you cannot challenge it.

But, Paul says – not so fast. Look at the Law – the Bible – the Scriptures.

This is not what it actually teaches.

Paul then gives a masterclass in hermeneutics – how to interpret the Bible.

He shows us that God designed this event to divide all people into two families.

These two families derive from:

**Two Sons** – who come from
**Two Mothers** – who have
**Two Statues** – through
**Two Births** – leading to
**Two Covenants** – and ultimately to
**Two Jerusalems** – two very different eternal destinies

Paul says – listen to the Law. By that he means look carefully at the whole counsel of Scripture.
How do traditions and heresies start? Often it is by taking a verse or passage out of the context of the whole Bible.

How do you dismantle traditions and heresies? By exposing them to the truth of the whole of Scripture.

This is a crucial principle.

In Acts 20 – when Paul was addressing the Ephesian Elders he said – I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.

At this church we seek to listen to the Law and take the Bible seriously.

Two things this includes are these.

1. We labour to show you that the gospel truth – centred on Jesus – is the same from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22.

We labour to teach every book and passage. You won’t just hear John 3:16 every week.


In fact, I suspect most of you won’t have heard this morning’s passage taught before because it is a hard passage.

I can tell you it is not what I would have chosen for a baptism Sunday with visitors.

2. There are some passages and teachings that at first glance seem a bit hard or don’t easily fit.

We labour to understand that passage in its context.

We don’t let a superficial reading undermine the clear teaching of the gospel.

We don’t build a tradition on that flawed understanding.

For example – when we read in Colossians 1 that Jesus is the first born of all creation – we don’t say wow – forget the mountain of passages teaching Jesus is God – this trumps them all – we better go and form our cult that teaches Jesus is not God.

Or we don’t come to Acts 2:38 – be baptised … for the forgiveness of your sins – and say – well forget every Scripture that teaches baptism in water does not save – that salvation comes by faith – we better go and form our little cult that says you can’t be saved without us baptising you in water.
This is what the Judaisers had done. They had twisted Scripture – proof-texted Scripture – to come up with their tradition that God giving the Law at Sinai proved they were the chosen ones.

Paul says to counter this – look carefully at Scripture – in this case – the births of:

**Two Sons** – Ishmael and Isaac.

There were many similarities between Ishmael and Isaac. They were both biological sons of Abraham. They were both circumcised. They both grew up in the same home.

Yet for all their similarities, there were **three** crucial differences between them.

The first crucial difference was their mothers.

**Two Mothers** – Hagar and Sarah.

There were a number of differences between these women. We might think that one fundamental one was that Sarah was Abraham’s wife – Hagar was not.

But the difference Paul zeroes in on was their status – which is the second crucial difference.

**Two Statuses** – Slave and free.

Hagar was born a slave – therefore her son was born into slavery.

Sarah was free – therefore her son was born free.

And this leads to the final crucial difference – the manner of their births.

**Two Births** – Flesh and Promise

Verse 23:

> But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise.

Ishmael was born according to the flesh. Abraham and Sarah had to take matters into their own hands to get it done.

He was not a product of a divine miracle – but good old fashioned human ingenuity and works.

Today – if a woman’s biological clock is ticking and normal means have not produced a baby – there are many options.

Hormones, IVF, surrogacy.

In Abraham’s day – the options were limited.
He chose a bad one and Sarah’s desperation meant she even suggested it.

I can’t stress enough – this was not a wise option on any level.

The result was a messed-up family. A child – but – not the child they really wanted.

He came from a surrogate mother who was an Egyptian slave.

He was a son who was not Sarah’s and therefore not the one promised by God.

Imagine the baggage this poor kid grew up with in that dysfunctional home.

Knowing you are not the child they really wanted.

Knowing your mother is slave to the real mistress of the house.

You can imagine family meal times.

If you think your home is messed up – then think about this household and thank God for yours.

In contrast Isaac was born through promise.

God promises Sarah would miraculously have a son.

They couldn’t cause his birth even if they wanted to.

Sarah was too infertile – too old – it was all too impossible.

But God fulfilled His promise and did the impossible.

What is the significance of all of this?

Paul tells us. Galatians 4:24:

Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai.

Yeah – that is really easy to understand isn’t it.

Allegory!

When I went to Bible college – allegory was a dirty word.

Allegory was licence to make anything mean anything.

Here is one I have heard several times. David picked up five smooth stones to defeat Goliath. Allegorically, these represent the stones of faith, obedience, service, prayer and the Holy Spirit – by which you can defeat the giants of your life.
No – they were five smooth stones.

So what is an allegory?

An allegory is a story in which the characters and events are intended by the author to teach spiritual truths.

In other words – the story itself makes the spiritual point – eg The Prophet Nathan’s story of the man who killed his neighbour’s lamb is an allegory. The Parable of the Prodigal Son is an allegory. Pilgrim’s Progress is an allegory. The book Animal Farm is an allegory.

While most allegories are works of fiction – at times God intends real historical events to also be an allegory. The most famous one is this one – Ishmael and Isaac.

But what is the spiritual truth the allegory of their lives teach?

As I said – up until now – every Jew would have been nodding – good exegesis Paul.

But, their ears would have pricked up when he said – two covenants!

They would have said the descendants of Ishmael never received a covenant.

Only the descendants of Isaac received a covenant. They got the Law – the Mosaic Covenant.

About now they would be putting their hand up to ask Paul – did you misspeak? Surely you meant to say one covenant.

But before they can do that – Paul says something that would have enraged every Jew.

One [covenant] is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar.

It was on Mount Sinai that Moses received the Law – the Mosaic Covenant.

Paul says – the covenant from Mount Sinai – doesn’t free you – it enslaves you – and even worse:
The Law rightly belongs in the line of Hagar and Ishmael.

A statement like this would lead a Jew to have an apoplectic fit.

This would be like telling a Muslim – Mohammed was actually a Christian evangelist.

The Jews would be incensed.

The Law is what frees.

They would have screamed – Paul you are insane – you are rewriting history.

We Jews – the descendants of Isaac – the free son – we are the ones who went to Sinai and received the Law.

The Law is our covenant – it has nothing to do with Ishmael.

Hagar’s descendants through Ishmael – the slave son – are Gentiles who became the enemies of Israel. They never had the Law – they never kept the Law.

Now, at first glance you might think the Jews have a point.

You might think Paul is playing a little free and easy with his allegorizing of the facts here.

But he isn’t.

Notice the absolutely key statement here. Paul says the two women – Hagar and Sarah represent two covenants.

What is a covenant?
A covenant sets out the terms and conditions between two parties.

If you and I agree – you give me $10,000 and I give you my car – that is a covenant.

But, a *biblical* covenant sets out the terms and conditions detailing what God will do for man and what man will do for Him.

When Paul says – two covenants – one is the covenant that was given on Mount Sinai – which clearly means the covenant with Moses – the Law.

In the context – the other seems to be the covenant with Abraham – the covenant of promise.

Here is the crucial point.

You become a partaker of these covenants – not by birth – not by direct descent – but by doing what the covenant told you to do.

The Law – the Mosaic Covenant given at Sinai – did not say – congratulations – you will be saved just by being born a Jew.

There are plenty of branches off the Jewish family tree – that no one claims are real Jews.

No! The Law said this – Leviticus 18:5:

> You shall therefore keep my statutes and my rules; if a person does them, he shall live by them: I am the LORD.

Keep the Law and live. Keep all the Law – then by your effort – you can live.
But as Paul has pointed out what the Jews conveniently forget is that the Law makes it clear – no one can do – this – so the result is that this covenant bears children of slavery.

If I made a covenant with my son and said – Pete – if you train hard and run the 100 metres in under 8 seconds – I will give you a million dollars.

No amount of training will get him that fast – it is impossible – so if he keeps training for something he can’t achieve – he is in bondage.

Remember – Hagar produced a son by human effort who is enslaved. This is what the Law does.

Since the Law is a covenant of flesh – of works – of human effort – since this is a covenant of slavery – Paul says it is to be associated with the son born by the flesh – the slave – Ishmael.

In contrast – the Promise – the Abrahamic Covenant – said – One will come who will keep the Law and do what you can’t. By His effort – you can live.

You enter into this covenant by faith – believe this and you will be free.

This covenant is associated with the son born by promise – the free son – Isaac.

Sarah produced a son by promise who is free.

Two mothers – leading to two covenants.

Paul says – the result of these two covenants is two families.

Those who trust in the promise – the family of Isaac – the family with Sarah as their mother.

And everyone else.

Those who trust in works, Law, human effort – the family of Ishmael – the family with Hagar as their mother.

And because these covenants are not entered into by birth – the families that make them up are not racially based. It is not divided along lines like Jew and Gentile. Instead:
Everyone – Gentiles AND Jews can attempt to keep the Law by the power of the flesh and are thus enslaved children of Hagar.

Everyone – Gentiles AND Jews can trust the promise by the power of the Spirit and are thus free children of Sarah.

Thus endeth the major part of Paul’s argument.

Now, I won’t ask for a show of hands about who is with me and who I lost.

I know full well this is tough stuff.

But read it over, meditate on it, read Genesis – and I think you will see Paul is absolutely right. There are:

**Two Covenants** – the Mosaic and the Abrahamic.

And now he pulls out the big guns. These lead to very different eternal destinations:

**Two Jerusalems** – Earthly and Heavenly.

Verses 25-27:

Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. For it is written, “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.”

Hagar is associated with the Law given on Mount Sinai – and her children are the present earthly Jerusalem – enslaved.
The Jews trying to earn salvation by keeping the Law. The Jews who killed Jesus. They are lost – eternally.

But Sarah is associated with the promise – and her children are the Jerusalem above – the heavenly Jerusalem – free.

The true children of God – those whose destiny is heaven.

But instead of saying – and Sarah is our mother – he says – our ultimate mother – is the Jerusalem above – heaven – where God dwells.

Our salvation comes from heaven. And to prove his point – Paul quotes Isaiah 54.

Here the prophet Isaiah is speaking to Jerusalem – it was a wasteland after the exile but God promises that the day will come when He will bless His people again.

A heavenly Jerusalem is coming which will be made up of the saved people of God.

So, here is Paul’s argument.

These two families are divided by whether you trust in the Law or Promise – and they end in two destinations – heaven and hell.

And this leads to Paul’s second point. Since there are – two families – we have:

**Two Choices.**

Verses 28-31:
Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

Just as Ishmael persecuted Isaac – so the Judaisers are persecuting those who taught a gospel of faith alone.

Sarah recognized the threat and cast out the slave woman and her son.

Paul’s point is this. Anyone who teaches anything other than salvation:

- By Grace Alone
- Through Faith Alone
- Based on the completed work of Christ Alone

Is a threat to the church and must be cast out – rejected – banished from our midst.

We have two choices.

We can tolerate false teachers and their traditions – or we can cast them out.

We can tolerate a danger to our souls – or call them out for what they are – heretics.

I am often asked – how important is doctrine?

When it deals with the heart of the gospel itself – the answer is – there is nothing more important.

I have been asked many times – does it really matter if we add in a few works to our faith.

Yes it does.

If you are saved by faith alone – adding anything to it – turns it into not a false gospel.

Paul says – don’t listen, don’t be fooled – cast it out.

Just pause for a moment to think about what we have just read.

How incredible is our God?

He shapes history. In this case he shaped the birth of two brothers such that the events of their lives pictured the significance of the coming of Jesus 2000 years later – and fast forward another 2000 years to today – and it teaches us how we are saved.

God designed the birth of these brothers to picture the gospel – the path to salvation.
Truly, the Bible is amazing. God gave us the Scriptures to savour, to rejoice in and to obey.

But there is another choice implicit in this whole section.

The story of Hagar and Sarah tells us that every single person ever born is a son of Abraham. Not by biology – but by covenant.

And the difference is who is our momma.

Paul has told us – we don’t get to choose our biological mother – but we do get to choose our spiritual mother!

Today you saw a baptism. In a sense you heard a testimony that said – by faith I believe the promise that Jesus did what I could not. He fulfilled the Law.

So I am a son of Abraham. I doubt any baptised this morning are direct descendants of Abraham.

But – they are his son because they chose Sarah as their spiritual mother. I am free. I am an heir. I am headed to the Jerusalem above – heaven.

But we need to remember – there is another covenant – works – Law – self-righteousness.

Some have chosen this covenant deliberately – they are attempting to earn their salvation by good works – by pleasing God.

But many have chosen this covenant by default – they might be atheists or agnostics. The Law they are following might be their own wisdom, their own decisions – captain of their own destiny.

Most don’t even know they are under that covenant.

But the Bible is clear – whether you know it or not – everyone has chosen one path or the other.

Everyone has chosen their spiritual mother. Either Hagar – and they are enslaved – they can’t make sense of this world, they are mired in hopelessness and emptiness.

Or Sarah – and they have finally found freedom – in Christ this world makes sense and there is joy.

How do you know who’s your momma?

Trust in Christ alone and Sarah is your momma and heaven is your home.

Trust anything else and Hagar is your momma and hell is your home.
But God desires all of us to accept His offer to join His family, trust God alone and have heaven as your home, by faith.

If any would like to know more – believe me I know the way I dealt with this passage might not make the truth seem as clear and wonderful as it truly is – so if you would like to know more, I would love to have the chance to talk more with you and I would count that a privilege.

For those who know they are heirs of God by faith – rejoice – you are not children of the slave but of the free woman.
Main Point: If you want to be a son of the Father – choose your momma wisely.

General Questions:

1. What is an allegory?
2. What is a covenant?
3. What are the dangers of tradition?
4. What is the tradition Paul is arguing against in Galatians 4:21-31?
5. Why do you think Paul picked an allegorical argument from the lives of Isaac and Ishmael to counter a gospel of faith plus works?
6. How do you know when something is descriptive – tells you what happened and when something is proscriptive – tells you what to do? E.g. How do you know if what Sarah did giving Hagar to Abraham is descriptive or proscriptive? Does this situation teach us anything about polygamy?
7. When you get a tough passage like this one – how should you go about deciding what it means? What principles can you apply?
8. How would you sum up the way the Jews understood the family tree of Abraham’s two sons?
   - Who would they put on each branch?
   - How do you get on each branch?
9. How would you sum up the way Paul understood the family tree of Abraham’s two sons?
   - Who would he put on each branch?
   - How do you get on each branch?
10. How do you decide who is right?
11. Why was the tradition of the Jews so dangerous?
12. What is the relationship between the Abrahamic Covenant and the New Covenant?
13. In what ways does it free us?
14. How do you get to choose your spiritual momma?

Application Questions:

1. What did you learn about studying the Bible from this text?

2. What traditions do you think churches like ours can get caught up in?

3. How could you use the principles of this passage evangelistically?

4. How could you use it in witnessing to a Jew?

5. Are there any dangerous traditions – our church needs to deal with – or you need to deal with?