God's Presence is the Difference (Part 2)

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[0:00] We'll stop in Genesis and move to our next book of the Bible, which I'll be letting you know about soon.! So, Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age at the appointed time of which God had spoken to him.

So, Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore to him, Isaac.
Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.
Now, Abraham was 100 years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Sarah said, God has made, God has made laughter for me.
Everyone who hears will laugh with me. And she said, who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have born him a son in his old age.
The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking.
[1:37] Therefore she said to Abraham, drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be in heir with my son Isaac. Well, the matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son.

But God said to Abraham, do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid. Whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named.
And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant, your seed. So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar, putting them on her shoulder, and gave her the boy and sent her away.
And she departed and wandered about in the wilderness of Beersheba. Now when the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him about a bow shot away, for she said, Do not let me see the boy die.
And she sat opposite him and lifted up her voice and she wept. Well, God heard the lad crying. And the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, What is the matter with you, Hagar?
[2:59] Hagar, do not fear, for God has heard, God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him.

Well, then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the lad a drink. In other words, it saved their lives.
Well, God here was with the lad. And he grew. And he lived in the wilderness and became an archer. He lived in the wilderness of Paran.
And his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. Alright, we covered all of that last time. I'll do a very brief review in a moment.
Here's what we'll be dealing with today. Now, it came about at that time that Abimelech, here he comes again, and Phicol, the commander of his army, spoke to Abraham saying, God is with you in all that you do.
[4:10] Now, therefore, swear to me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity. But according to the kindness that I've shown to you, you shall show to me and to the land in which you have sojourned.

Well, Abraham said, I swear it. But Abraham complained to Abimelech because of the well of water which the servants of Abimelech had seized.
And Abimelech said, you know, I don't know who has done this thing. You did not tell me nor did I hear of it until today. Well, Abraham took sheep and oxen and gave them to Abimelech.

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And the two of them made a covenant. Then Abraham set seven ewe lambs of the flock by themselves. And Abimelech said to Abraham, what do these seven ewe lambs mean which you've set by themselves?
And Abraham said, you shall take these seven ewe lambs from my hand so that it may be a witness to me that I dug this well.
[5:19] In other words, it's mine. Therefore, he called that place Beersheba because there the two of them took an oath. So they made a covenant at Beersheba and Abimelech and Phicol, the commander of his army, arose and returned to the land of the Philistines.

Abraham planted a tamarisk tree at Beersheba and there he called on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God.
And Abraham sojourned in the land of the Philistines for many days. When you read stuff like this, particularly this final section about Abimelech and all, does it kind of spur you to ask, what in the world does this have to do with anything?
It's just a story. Okay, Abraham made a covenant with Abimelech. What do I do with that? There's so much here and God doesn't waste anything.
So I hope that it piques your interest, particularly when you read something and you're not quite certain how it immediately relates to your walk with the Lord or what the Lord's doing or how the Lord operates.
[6:32] That will cause you to even more greatly dig in and say, I know that there's treasure here. Just because it's not jumping off the page at me doesn't mean it's not valuable. And that's what we'll do together this morning.

You see here the gentlemen have put God's presence is the difference for the title of my message. It's kind of a part tour from last time as we finish up this chapter together.
So let's talk for a few minutes about some different aspects of walking with the Lord as Christians. Something that is unique to you as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.
So I'm going to make some statements here. Now follow this. Let's see what we do with this. In every season and situation of your life, you do not have a choice.
And in every situation and season of your life, you do have a choice.
[7:44] Both are true about you as a believer. So there's something unique here to you as a believer and something very common to us as human beings.

One of them has to do with not having a choice. And one of them has to do with having a choice. Now let me tell you what I mean. In every situation and season of your life, you do not have a choice about whether you will worship or not worship.
You were made to worship and worship you will. You cannot help it. Every human being, unbelievers, you worshipped before you were a Christian.
Every day, every moment, you worshipped. We all worship. All of your unsaved friends, family, co-workers, all of them who don't walk with the Lord, don't love the Lord, whatever.
They worship every single day. They probably just aren't aware of it. But God made them to do that. And they have to do it. So that's what we don't have a choice about as human beings.
[8:58] We were made to worship. What you do have a choice about in every situation, season, and circumstance of your life is who or what you will worship.

Now I'm saying this as a Christian. Now we're getting into the unique part. I can't say that about unbelievers.
Unbelievers do not have a choice about who and what they will worship. Listen to this carefully now. Because we're all made to worship doesn't mean that we all have the choice.
Unbelievers don't have a choice. They have a choice in the sense that they have to worship. But what they aim it at will always be the same.
That's not true of you. As a believer, you have a choice about who and what you will worship, whereas they do not. You have the choice of making your life about worshiping God or about worshiping you.
[10:05] Your spiritual life comes down to those two choices. That's the bottom line. Whenever we're worshiping and we're always doing it, it is always a matter of am I worshiping me in whatever form that might take whether a hobby is involved or whatever else, sin, or am I worshiping God?

You with me? Alright? There are only two religions in the world. Out of all of the different faiths and all of the different types of expressions of religious worship, there are only two.

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One is the religion of self, and one is the religion of the Savior, the true Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
One is a religion of human achievement, merit. We call that works. Right?
And one is a divine achievement. Human achievement, divine achievement. Only one leads to life, both here and eternally.
[11:27] All of the rest of them can be characterized as human achievement and self. And they all lead to the same place. No matter what they look like, no matter what book they read, no matter what rituals they go through, they all lead to the same place.

Because they're all based on satanic lies. Demonic deception. And over here, there is one Savior, and one Lord, and one truth, and one way.
I am the way, the truth, and the life, Jesus said. That's it. Now that's not popular. People don't like to hear that.
Especially in maybe a country where we pride ourselves on our choices. But I am saying to you, beloved, that unbelievers don't have a choice in the fact that they will always worship.
And we are the only ones that have a choice in who we will worship. Because we're believers, we can choose to worship God. God has made that for us as a gift. We don't have to worship sin, Satan, and self.
[12:38] We can worship the true God because He has revealed Himself to us in His Son, and He has come to live in us that we might worship Him in spirit and truth.

So now I want you to think about this with me. When the Bible tells us to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, it is telling us to worship God in every aspect of life.
You see that? Every aspect of life. When the Bible says, whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, it is telling us to worship God in everything.
And then when Jesus tells you in the Bible, that if anyone wishes to come after me, follow me, be my learner and my follower, he must, these are non-negotiable, he must deny himself.
That's the one over here, human achievement, works. He must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. This is divine achievement as opposed to human.
[13:51] Take up his cross, the work of God in his life, to bring you to salvation in Jesus Christ. Christ. Now folks, what I'm saying to you is this, life is about worship, and worship is about the desires of your heart, for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

In other words, where your desires reside, what you most desire in any given moment, that's where your heart will be, that's where your loyalties will be.
Now you follow in this, okay? Our passage then, as we come to Abraham, for us to see these, I'm telling you all this in principle form, because this is what we're seeing in the life of Abraham.
So our passage breaks down into three sections, highlighting God's blessings, and Abraham's responses of the worship and obedience of his heart toward God.
Everything that's happening in these three vignettes that we see. The first one is the birth of his son. The second one is him having to send Hagar and Ishmael out of his household.
[15:08] And the third one is the covenant that he makes with Abimelech. And each one of those, we see a man worshiping God, responding to God, leaning into the divine achievement, that God has made for him to follow the Lord.

That's what we're seeing in his life. And so, in the way of a brief review, especially for those who might not have been here last week, we see Abraham's worship of God in Isaac's birth, in this first section, down one through eight.
Now I'm just going to do a quick reminder, I'm not going to re-preach all of this. You can listen to last week's sermon, I hope you have, so you're kind of up to speed with us. If you look at verse one, then the Lord took note of Sarah, as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah, as he had promised.
That breaks down into what we call a chiasm. It is a Hebrew literary device to show emphasis in the text. The Hebrews reading this for the first time would have immediately recognized that device, and they would have known immediately what the emphasis of that verse was telling them.
It's one of the reasons I think they made the chapter division where they did here. You remember when this was originally written, there were no chapters and verses. This all ran together.
[16:33] And so we put that in there. This is what I told you last week a chiasm looks like. The letters correspond to one another. A corresponds to A.

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B to B. C to C. And so what we're seeing here is the emphasis is shown in letter C, where the point is God's Word being spoken and then fulfilled just as He had spoken it.
That's the idea. So we can say that God's truth, God's Word, is the foundation for a life of faith and worship.
What I'm saying to you in plain English is this. Abraham is responding to God's Word spoken to him. This is not mystical.
This is not woo! That's not what this is, folks. He is basing his life on something a lot firmer than his own opinion, his own intuition, his own idea of, well, did God say that into my brain or did I just think that?
[17:39] There's something a lot more sure than that. And it's God's spoken Word. So we turn to God's Word to build a foundation for life in faith and in worship.

If you'll turn with me to the book of John, the Gospel of John, I want to show you where Jesus gave this to us. It's John 4.
So Abraham, of course, would not have known these verses from the New Testament, but he's nevertheless living this out before the Lord because God's truth is God's truth.
In chapter 4, verse 23, Jesus is explaining what worship, true worship of God, is all about. And he's clearing up some issues between the Samaritans and the Jews about the place of worship and the type of worship.
And so he comes to verse 23 in chapter 4, but an hour is coming and now is when the true worshipers, because that's the issue, are you truly worshiping or not, will worship the Father in what?
[18:52] Spirit and truth. For such people, the Father seeks to be his worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.

So spirit there is not the Holy Spirit. That's your spirit. That is, it is spiritual for you as you offer your heart, your soul, to God.
And so we must base that worship on the truth. We cannot worship God apart from his truth, his word. That is foundational to who we are and to how we operate in relationship to God.
So now you understand a little bit better, if you didn't before, why Pastor Greg and I order our services in the way that we do. All of it is built around God's word.
So we open God's word in our call to worship and call us all to be on literally the same page of God's word to begin to order our minds and our hearts in worship.
[20:00] We pray that word back to God. We take cues from the verses or the passage and we use those thematic cues to pray back to God as his people.

When we sing, we try to sing, we do sing songs that exalt the truths of God from his word. We are singing God's word back to him, sometimes quite literally.
Now there are some denominations that will not sing what we call praise songs. They literally will only sing songs that have been derived from the Psalter, Psalms.
And they put those Psalms to music and they will only sing those because they have such a high view of singing God's word back to him.
Now we're not, we're not, we're just as I hope committed to singing the truth back to the Lord. But we believe that we can do that in the kinds of songs, the types of songs that we sing.
[21:03] We don't look down on those folks. I've been in a church like that before. It's quite beautiful. We just have a little bit different approach. So what we're saying again is God's truth is the foundation for a life of faith and worship.

You see there at the bottom. So Abraham and Sarah were both faithful. In what Jeff? They were faithful in response to God's faithfulness about Isaac's birth.
God's faithfulness to them is spurring them, spawning in them, creating in them this response of worship. That's the way it's supposed to be. In our services, you are prompted by the truth to offer worship to God.
What is worship? It is your soul ascribing worth, value to God. This is why I say unbelievers worship. Unbelievers, everyday people, ascribe worth to all kinds of different things and then you see them give their time, energy and resources to what they worship.
Do you not? Yeah. Well, we've been called to worship God above all. It doesn't mean we can't have other interests. We just never elevate anything, especially a given desire.

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[22:23] We cannot afford to elevate a desire above our loyalty of valuing God, of assigning worth to Him. So you say in your life, Lord, the greatest sense of worth that I have about any aspect of my life is the worth that I ascribe to you because you are worthy.

You are worthy. See? I know it's not rocket science, but sometimes we kind of get lost for the forest, for the trees kind of thing.
And we need to remember we've been made for worship. So Sarah and Abraham are responding to God's activities in their life and they're doing it together in this particular instance.
God is setting the pace. God is setting the priorities for them and they are following Him. He told them, I'm going to do this for you.
I'm going to take care of this for you. I'm going to be a shield to you and protect you and provide for you. And if Abraham and Sarah had remembered that and held that in their hearts, they never would have brought Hagar in the way they did.
[23:33] There'd be no Ishmael. Abraham never would have thrown Sarah under the bus with Abimelech or anybody else or the Pharaoh. None of that would have happened. But all of this is in God's hands and He's getting Abraham ready for an even greater test.

Truly the greatest test of his life of faith in the Lord. Alright? So that was point number one. That's just a quick overview of what we covered. Then we hit number two.
Abraham's worship of God in separating from Ishmael. So here's the second vignette. The second little story that we dealt with in the text. And you see that happening from verse 9 down.
Sarah saw the son of Hagar. Here's the problem. The Egyptian. So she saw, Sarah saw Ishmael who was born to Hagar mocking little Isaac.
We said that Isaac at this time is probably about three years old. So he's old enough to get around and move around. If you've ever tried to keep up with a three-year-old, it's exhausting. Just one of the little guys or girls.
[24:37] So he's moving all around. But then we have this 15 to 16-year-old boy, teenage boy in Ishmael. And he took an occasion to deride or to mock or we would say bully Isaac.

And Mama Sarah saw it. And that bear came out. And she said, we're not having this. She realized, she was insightful enough to realize that right there is a picture of what's coming.
More to come. And as my son gets older, it's going to get worse. Going to get worse. Right now, Ishmael can easily overcome him. But as my son grows in stature, Ishmael's going to have to go to higher and higher lengths to overcome him.
And she said, we're not having that. So that's what created the issue now that we read down through. And we got about halfway through this point. So I'm picking it back up with you.
And we'll move through it to the end and then take the third one. In this section, Abraham is told by the Lord to do something, listen now, truthful, good, and necessary.
[25:42] The first thing you have to grasp is that what Abraham is doing with Hagar and Ishmael is not bad. It is not wrong. It is not cruel. It is truthful, good, and necessary.

Which also deeply grieves his heart. Even though it's truthful, good, and necessary, it doesn't mean that it doesn't hurt him. that it's not hard for him. He doesn't understand the fuller reasoning of God in this action.
You ever been there? Where it's clear from God's Word that this is what you need to do to act faithfully to God, and yet, it's difficult for you. It hurts you in the moment.
It's painful. There may even be some doubt in your mind about, man, is this really? But Abraham, hear me now, Abraham trusts God to always direct him in what is best for him.
Now, we can say that, but we have to remember, yeah, well, he ain't always done that. Right? He hasn't always trusted God to always direct him in what is best for him.
[26:51] Sometimes he's kind of taking matters into his own hands. Aren't you glad the Bible doesn't leave that stuff out? Right. Because, you know, the Bible could make some of these characters so lofty, so big, so high above us that we just think, who can ever live that?

I don't live that. Is that the model? No, Jesus is the model. See? Jesus is the model and we can't live for Christ without Christ living in us. Now, God tells him, God tells Abraham, I want you to follow through on what Sarah's concerns are, what she said to you, and I want you to separate yourself and your household from the unbelieving influences of Hagar and her son, Ishmael.
That's the issue. But here's what God does. It's beautiful. God assures Abraham that God himself will take care of Hagar and Ishmael.

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And so that's the only way I think Abraham could send them into the wilderness at this point. God has graciously said, don't worry about them. I'm going to care for them.
I'm going to watch over them. And he tells them that he's going to, in verse 13, and of the son of the maid, Hagar, I will make a nation also because he's your descendant.
[28:13] Well, it's going to be hard for God to do that if he dies in the desert. All right? So you're reasoning it out. Abraham's not stupid. He might be stubborn and sinful at times, but he's not a stupid man.

So what are we seeing him here? Well, he sends them off into the wilderness with this promise from the Lord. And we need to principalize this and understand how it speaks to our heart. This is when this stuff starts coming out and we're going, man, thank you, Lord, for giving us these clear indications.
It is not always pleasant in the moment to obey the Lord, folks. But that doesn't mean it's wrong. Just because it doesn't feel good following the Lord doesn't mean it's bad or wrong.
Right? Sometimes, the hardest things that we do in our walk with the Lord are to follow the Lord when we don't understand. We don't have the full meal deal on what's coming.
But the Word tells us this is a good thing and a necessary thing and a truthful thing. And we always want to act in the truth. If anybody ever asks you what most defines you in your walk with Jesus, I already know you love Jesus, you want to serve Jesus, what most defines you?
[29:25] Here's what you need to say. His truth. His truth. I live by truth. Period. That doesn't make me popular sometime because the world is based on lies.

Alright. Here is one reason that this can be true in our relationship with others. That it's not always pleasant to obey the Lord. It is impossible for you or me or anyone else to understand spiritual things apart from the work of the Holy Spirit revealing those spiritual things to us.
If you just think about it, spiritual in the Bible means of the Holy Spirit. We cannot understand the spiritual things of God apart from the Holy Spirit making those things known to us.
This is one of the reasons it's not always pleasant in the moment to obey the Lord. We don't always have all the details even as Christians. But unbelievers have absolutely no hope or no way of understanding the deeper things of God because God doesn't live in them.
Now I want to show this to you real quickly. This is kind of an aside or an addendum to this. If you'll go to 1 Corinthians 2 Stay there hold your finger in Genesis. Now these are anchor texts.
[30:56] Sometimes I'll tell you that when we go to certain passages that I've learned over time these serve to anchor us in certain principalizing that we do in living for the Lord.

And here's one of them. It's 1 Corinthians 2 14 But a natural man Now a natural man means an unsaved person an unbeliever but an unbeliever does not accept the things of the Spirit of God. Why? Because they are foolishness to him and further he cannot understand them. Why? Because they are spiritually appraised.
Understood. Do you see that? An unbeliever cannot understand them. The things of God are foolishness to him and the reason for all of it is because they are spiritually understood.
That is the Holy Spirit has to help him or her understand them. Contrast that truth with what we're told about believers in verse 12.
[32:02] Now we believers have received see we received it not the spirit of the world but the capital S Holy Spirit who is from God why?

So that we may know the things freely given to us by God. You see that? The only way you can know the things freely given to you by God and Jesus Christ is if the Holy Spirit who is God reveals them to you.
Now I've got other messages I do on this section but that's enough to let you know what we're talking about. Believers and unbelievers live in the same world and they face very similar challenges of self of sin of Satan but here's the difference believers live in a very different spiritual context because they have the Holy Spirit living in them.
That's a game changer. unbelievers will never be able to understand or value your walk with Jesus so don't expect them to.
Nor will they ever understand your priority of glorifying God in everything so don't expect them to. If they demand their way and if that means you are left to choose God and truth over them or living a lie you choose God every time.

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[33:28] Now we hope that it doesn't come to that but I think daily we're pretty much faced with choices like that. Am I going to worry about being approved and applauded or am I going to be more concerned with God's approval on my life?

People God even Christians you know they may tempt you toward things that you think you know my conscience isn't comfortable with that I'm not at peace with that.
And you have to weigh that up in the Lord at that time. Henry Morris offered us some wise counsel here I think I shared this with you last time let's look at what Henry Morris a commentator says sometimes it is necessary for God's people if they're truly going to be in the will of God that is to be obedient to God and to enjoy the fullness of his blessing to separate completely from those who might be a source of friction and carnality do you see the purpose there not separate completely as in go live in a monastery you got to live in the real world you got to win people to Christ you can't do that if you leave them and go off and hide but you separate completely why you separate from those who might be a source of friction and carnality in a constant way in your life even though such separation would be difficult for you and will give those people you're separating from who don't understand the spiritual issues involved for the reasons I just told you occasion to criticize you occasion to ridicule you oh you holier than thou you think you're so much better than everybody else
I once had someone very very close to me tell me about a certain position that I held from scripture about homosexuality they said to me you know there are a lot of smart very wise very gifted very successful preachers out there who have the opposite view on this that you do and that was supposed to intimidate me and I said you know I'm not being prideful I'm telling you this was one of those moments because I'm very very close to this person and I had to say you know here here's what we can do you send me every single quote and every single sermon that you've listened to from those people and I will promise you to read everyone I will listen to every one of them and then we can get back together and we can talk about this and if they convince me from scripture
I'm wrong I will repent but understand this if I'm wrong it will overturn everything I believe about the Bible and about God and it will undermine every aspect of my faith that's what's at stake for me now I wasn't worried but I wanted that person to realize this is what we're doing because if God has lied to me about the sin of homosexuality he's lied to me about other things and I can't trust a God like that sometimes we have to separate and that became an issue of separation because I was supposed to cross that line of conviction in order to support and embrace this person in their lifestyle and I said I can't do it I can love you I can support you in so many other ways but I cannot cross that line as if to say this is normal and God is okay with it no matter what these other preachers are saying because they're wrong you say how did that turn out well the relationship dissolved but he never did follow through on what
[37:24] I asked of him so folks we need to judge wisely in these situations of life and the Bible this is the good part the Bible gives us sufficient wisdom to do that we have the most sophisticated answers for everything that concerns human ill human need the Bible has the you cannot get more sophisticated than the creator of the universe telling you the truth so plant your feet there folks and don't don't be intimidated by all this scientific sounding nonsense out there so much of it is in this particular situation here there are deeper spiritual issues to consider and to use as our guide so I want to ask you to remember something here it is I'll put it right up on the screen believers live in a heavenly spiritual context in all earthly life I hope that you will listen to that and think about that as a believer you live in a heavenly spiritual context while you're living on this earth which is not anything like heaven now the apostle

Paul helps us better understand this heavenly spiritual context as it applies to Sarah and Hagar I'm so thankful for this if you'll go to Galatians 4 this is where I didn't get to last time Galatians 4 we're going to have the New Testament help us look back on the spiritual context the root issue behind this separation so that you see the Lord's not being nasty or mean or cruel here this is truthful and necessary that this happened and Paul explains it chapter 4 of Galatians beginning in verse 19 he's offering some explanation here about who really is in the Lord and who's not and he says in 19 chapter 4 my children with whom I am again in labor until Christ is formed in you that's the issue everything I'm telling you and doing with you now is about you becoming more like Jesus so we need to understand right off the bat what the foundation is this isn't argument for argument sake I'm saying these things to you because this is how Christ is formed in you verse 20 but I could wish to be present with you now and to change my tone see his tone is a bit he's in discipline mode here

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this is daddy saying to the kids alright now for I am perplexed about you Paul says you know I'm having some trouble here tell me you who want to be under the law that's the issue you're Christians who want to run back into the ritual of Old Testament law and don't do that do you not listen to the law for it is written Abraham had to now he's going to tell him this is why you don't want to live under the human achievement aspects of your walk with God you want this to be about divine achievement and you want to learn to live out that divine achievement in your life you come over here and you try to make this a works based faith where it's all about you and what you do and what you bring to the table you're going to be in big trouble this is
Jeff paraphrasing Paul tell me now it is written that Abraham had two sons one by the bond woman who's that that should read slave woman because that's the literal rendition one is by the slave woman Hagar right and then one by the free woman who's that Sarah but the son by the bond woman Hagar was born according to the flesh there's your human achievement there's the law and the son by the free woman Sarah through the promise what God said what God swore to be true so one of them is based on human achievement and the other is based on God's promise divine achievement now he says this is an allegory this is allegorically speaking I've given you some examples here for these women are two covenants one proceeds from
Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves that is to sin she is Hagar now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem for Jerusalem is in slavery with her children see there were many many many unbelieving Jews who claimed Abraham as their father but they didn't know the Lord they were Jewish by birth but they weren't in their heart verse 26 but the Jerusalem above is here's the word again free she is our mother for it is written rejoice barren woman who does not bear break forth and shout you who are not in labor for more as a husband this is a prophecy and you brothers like Isaac are children of promise like who Isaac the free woman that's right Sarah and
[42:54] Isaac you are children of her you are in that line believing but as that time but as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the spirit and so it is now also what is that referring to the mocking isn't that true Ishmael born according to the flesh persecuted Isaac born according to the spirit and what does it say so it is now also can we say that today are the Ishmaelites persecuting God's people today absolutely and it's not going to stop president trump guess what until God comes again now I'm not saying I'm not dissing on our president please pray for him there are probably things going on behind the scenes I have no idea about it's driving me crazy I have to pray every day about this stuff that I can't even watch it anymore this is the problem so it is now also and it will go on being like that but what does the scripture say cast out the bond woman and her son oh gee where's that written for the son of the bond woman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman so then brethren we are not children of the slave woman but of the free woman amen we are children of the promise not because we're

Jewish we are children of the promise because we are trusting! God's word in Christ it's what God has said! that passage helps us see why this separation had to happen it was according to God's wisdom and it was according to God's choice now I'm going to put this up on the screen God chose Isaac he did not choose Ishmael and that is God's choice he is sovereign in that we cannot say that's not fair what we can say is that's what the Bible says one more place I'll take you before we move on Romans 9 some of you were probably thinking of this passage as soon as all of that came out of my mouth he chose Isaac he did not choose Ishmael and that is his choice
Romans 9 there are there are Christians who really really really struggle with God's sovereignty and salvation which means God gets to choose the doctrine as we know it is called election and there are folks who really struggle with that and I'm sorry for them because it's one of the most if not the most beautiful doctrines in the Bible that God without any must he didn't have to chose people out of all of the unbelieving to save and that's not wrong it's not bad it's not unfair so if we pick this up in Romans 9 verse 6 but it is not as though the word of God has failed for they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel so he is answering the issue of his heart brokenness that there are many many many Jews who are claiming to know God and walk with God and yet they are not with God they are deceived nor are they all children that is because they are
Abraham's descendants oh yeah they're Jews in the Jewish sense but through Isaac your descendants will be named in other words they don't have the faith of Abraham and Isaac and God they're not looking to God for salvation they're looking at human achievement and works do you see

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that there and not only this but there was Rebecca also when she had conceived twins by one man our father Isaac for though the twins were not yet born the twins had not done anything good or bad they're still in their mom's womb so that God's purpose according to his choice would stand not because of works but because of him who calls God gets to choose he gets to call people to salvation it's his choice and so it was said to will serve the younger which is a swap from cultural standards usually the younger serves the older the one born first just as it's written
Jacob I love but Esau I hated God's choice what shall we say then there is no injustice with God is there because that's the argument oh that's not right may it never be for he says to Moses I will have mercy on whom I have mercy and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion so then here it is this is the clincher it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs but on God who has mercy amen the scripture says to Pharaoh for this very purpose I raised you up to demonstrate my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth so then he has mercy on whom he desires and he hardens whom he desires you say to me well why does he still find fault who can resist that on the contrary who are you old man who answers back to God the thing molded will not say to the molder why did you make me like this will it or does not the potter have a right over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use what if
[48:45] God although willing to demonstrate his wrath and to make his power known endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction and he did so to make known the riches of his glory upon vessels of mercy which he prepared before hand for glory what did it say which he prepared beforehand for glory even us whom he also called not from among Jews only but also from among Gentiles this goes on and on and ends look at verse 30 what shall we say then that Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness attain righteousness even the righteousness which is by faith but Israel pursuing a law of righteousness did not arrive at that law why why is this the case Gentiles outside of the Abrahamic covenant are coming to know Christ what is this all about and then Israel isn't why because they did not pursue it by faith but as though it were by works they stumbled over the stumbling stone

Jesus they wouldn't receive Jesus just as it's written I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense that's Christ and he who believes in him capital H Jesus will not be disappointed isn't that an amen moment that is our hope in the Lord Jesus this is why separation has to take place are Hagar and Ishmael part of the same covenant that Abraham lives through his faith in God no take note of when Hagar encountered the angel of the Lord in chapter 16 verse 7 go back there in Genesis chapter 16 verse 7 now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness by the spring on the way to shore and he said Hagar Sarai's maid where have you come from and where are you going and she said I'm fleeing from the presence of my mistress
Sarah and the angel of the Lord we think the incarnate Jesus said to her return to your mistress and submit yourself to her authority moreover the angel of the Lord said to her I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count he would do that through Ishmael there's another promise of the Lord the angel of the Lord in verse 7 name that term Lord is Yahweh or Jehovah and it means God's covenant name I put it up here on the screen this is God's covenant name now I'm covering part of why we understand the difference here are Hagar and Ishmael part of the same covenant that Abraham lives in his faith in God no no how do we know that well here's one evidence of it the angel of the Lord here is the term for God's covenant name so how can that be applied to her if she's an unbeliever alright that's very interesting Morris pointed out that God uses his covenant name in 16 7 because
Hagar is still part of Abraham's household and that's why God is sending her back what does that mean she lived under Abraham's authority and she benefited from God's grace at work in Abraham's life even though she was an unbeliever do you understand that so in our terms we could say it like this I'm a believer my wife is a believer but we have unbelieving children and yet under the umbrella of the grace of God that me and my wife live under my kids benefit from the blessings of that grace at work in our life they're not saved and yet they benefit from God showering his grace on us and that flows to them in the sense of they are living under that with us okay you with me that doesn't mean they're going to grow up and be saved does it all right as long as so this is this is similar to what we're seeing here if you go now back to 2117 I'm showing you why it is that we can know that

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Hagar and Ishmael are not believers even though God is blessing them and going to take care of them and going to give them many many millions of descendants in the future what is that all about in 2117 we have the angel of God God is Elohim I put it up here on the screen for you that refers to God as the mighty majestic one who rules over his universe the God of creation rather than the God of redemption this is the God of every human being it's not the God of redemption different name this is the same God but he's doing a different thing unbelievers are not redeemed but they live under their creator whether they know it or not and that's the name that's being used here as Hagar is being sent out now she's no longer under that grace blessing in Abraham's life do you see it might seem strange that God hears the prayers of these two unbelievers Hagar and Ishmael but listen God cares for them he spares their lives even as they live in rebellion toward him [53:58] God made these two souls folks he cares for each person but even more please notice what God told Abraham in verse 13 what did he say to him in 21 13 the son Ishmael of the maid Hagar I will make a nation also why why would you do that Lord because he is your seed Abraham that's why here's a grace blessing on Hagar and Ishmael it's not saving grace because they're believers it's because God is taking care of Abraham and Abraham's son Abraham's blood runs in that boy's veins and God said I'll make him a nation too and the Ishmaelites and those who are descendant from Isaac have been at war ever since the Bible gives us the explanation for it in verses 15 and 16 we see him acting on it when the water in the skin was used up

Hagar left the boy under one of the bushes she went and sat down opposite him about a bow shot away just far enough to where she probably couldn't see him and she couldn't hear him I don't want to see my boy die and so she went and sat opposite him and she lifted up her voice and wept and then Ishmael for his part he was crying as well I think the boy at that age 15 16 he realized this is it this is it and he's crying he's thirsty it's hurting and so where does all of this leave us now I want to show you what she's that's the wilderness she's in doesn't that look fun when you just want to take a canteen of water and a piece of bread and walk out into that look at this one it just goes on forever this is this is the southern most boundary of modern day Israel so this is the
Negev this is everything south of the border of Israel south of what is now modern day Beersheba it was Beersheba where Abraham lived and many of his sons that's that's pretty intense isn't it she's resigning herself to death but she tried to avoid seeing him die look here's the difference but God sees and hears doesn't he God's presence is the difference for these two human beings that's always the case God's presence in your life is the difference isn't it now the God of the universe comes and presents himself to them not to live in them but to care for them and he is the difference without God they die but he made a promise to Abraham I'm going to take care of him he's going to be a mighty nation he told Hagar that too back in chapter 16 in verses 17 through 21 we see
God making good on what he promised he heard Ishmael crying and he came and approached the mother do not fear God has heard God has heard the voice of the lad where he is arise lift up the lad it's so beautiful hold him by the hand you go and embrace this young man take him by the hand and lead him for I will make a great nation of him and then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water and she filled the skin and gave the lad a drink folks this is so repeated evidence of God's tender caring even though we know from scripture that Hagar and Ishmael are outside the covenant of promise God's taking care of them when all was hopeless up on the screen God heard this is the message we give to unbelievers isn't it God hears friend hold out hope God hears you need to call out to
God this is what I tell people when I witness! I give them the gospel and I say now having heard that what do you want to say to God in your heart and sometimes they say nothing and I'm like okay I planted a seed I don't take offense to that this is God's business I don't save anybody I'm just the messenger boy but sometimes the tears start on occasion maybe sometimes you see the heaviness you see them you know it's that sin is weighing!
[58:36] them down and I say to them what would you want just talk what do you want to say to God I take the pray thing out of it because I don't want to intimidate them just say what do you want to say to him and then you listen and they'll tell you if God's working in their heart you can't see it but you can hear it this is what God's doing he's listening to the need of these people Hagar knew this form of an encounter with God four years earlier in 16 where God came to her and made her this promise that's 16 11 God had said this to Abraham as well in chapter 17 verse 20 he'd made this promise so God reaffirms the promise to Hagar in 21 18 look over at that one 21 18 arise lift up the lad hold him by the hand for I will make a great nation out of him now verse 19

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I believe the well is a miracle of God's grace folks there were some commentators that said the well was there all the time she just missed it I'm like yeah whatever I think this is a miracle of God's grace I think the text and the context support it the flow of what God is doing is just absolutely incredible which is why I'm!
taking time to made a well there it is Hagar had closed her eyes shut because she didn't want to see Ishmael die I think the woman is sitting there weeping and saying something I don't know what she's doing there's no specifics but she's got her eyes closed and she's weeping which at this state of dehydration there may not have even been any tears and she knows they're about to die so she can't even look at her son wasting away helpless nothing to do about it God literally opened her eyes look and there's a well there wasn't a well and now there's a well that's our God folks that's our God and so he literally caused her eyes to open and showed his physical care for here's what we can principalize from this our sin does not limit
God in any way from caring for us in verse 20 God was with the lad which is amazing to me he grew he lived in the wilderness he became an archer he lived in the wilderness of Paran that's what I just showed you those pictures were that wilderness and his mother took a wife for him in the land of Egypt and I don't know what he had to shoot I look at that thing and I go there's nothing living there so you're an archer what did you shoot I don't know God God provided something for him this is God's goodness expressed by his common grace every unbeliever every human being who's ever lived every soul who's living now lives under the common grace of God his goodness expressed to them not saving grace common grace the grace that says I'm going to give you food to eat clothes to wear vehicles to drive vacations to take money to spend I'm going to keep the sun in the sky the moon where it's supposed to be the seasons changing and you get to live in my world even though you hate me you get to breathe my air you get to have babies you get to raise people up you get to laugh and have fun all of that's because
I'm a good God finally I'll give you this one and we'll stop Abraham's worship of God and his covenant with Abimelech in all of this what a telling and powerful statement of identity when he says God is with you in all that you do I don't have to say much about this one God is with you in all that you do you see that in verse 22 it's true of Isaac it's true of Jacob it's true of Joseph that's coming behind them I've got verses here I won't share them with you for the sake of time when Abimelech makes these requests of Abraham to me they don't sound unreasonable Gerar where they're talking about meeting Gerar is just southeast of Gaza modern day Gaza in what would be the land of the Philistines we have two references to that in the text the land of the Philistines so they're going to be the arch enemies of Israel in the future what we have here is an issue over water rights [63:23] Abraham's servants dug the well Abimelech servants came and took the well water is precious it's a precious commodity and so before Abraham agrees to all of this he says yeah but there's one thing we need to get cleared up and it's this well issue so he makes a condition the irony of this is God is already promised in 1 2 3 11 in 11 instances before this I have the references here God has promised I'll give you this land and your descendants will own it forever what Abimelech doesn't realize is he's taken something that already belongs to Abraham and now Abraham is going to buy it back when it already belongs to him he's going to buy something back this is his faith I know God has already promised this to me I don't have to go to war with this guy it's going to come to me anyway so let me do the higher thing the higher road thing the good thing

I'll buy him back with seven lambs Beersheba is very interesting in terms of what it means Beersheba means well of the seven or well of oath so the seven lambs became what he used in offering an oath the seven lambs for the oath again don't let this be wasted on you this signifies a heavenly spiritual reality for Abraham Abraham's actions with Abimelech are acts of worshiping God to call on the name of the Lord in the final verses here that means to worship this is what you do every single time you pray you offer worship to God you sing his praises you're offering worship to God you're calling on the name of the Lord I'm calling on you now Lord see this is what he's doing so what do we have going on here in all of this well when you hear that Abraham had to use lambs to buy back what was already here here what does that remind you of what lamb was used to buy back our souls to the
God who made them there it is now you have the point now you know why this is in the Bible isn't that amazing we probably would have just went right by that but that's exactly what's happening here God will one day buy back the souls that he made from the devil Jesus will pay God the devil won't get paid Jesus will pay God in the sacrifice of his!

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life to buy us back to God who made us and we call that redemption and that's the beauty of what God has done alright the Lord's table made us take a little bit more time to end here but I wanted to get that in for you and show you what we were doing will you join me in prayer then we'll sing and Greg will pray well no we're going to do something else too aren't we real quick before you pray yeah okay let's pray together father we thank you for the word that you've given us we thank you for the testimony of your grace and Abraham and Sarah we thank you for the way that in your tenderness and goodness you took care of Hagar and Ishmael you saved their lives Lord even though they hated you and this is what you do with unbelievers all around the world every single day they stay alive they breathe your air they are sustained by your common grace and we pray for them to come to know you in a saving way we have friends and relatives that don't know you that are headed to a devil's hell and
God we're terrified for them in this help us to be courageous in life it's in his name that we pray amen

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