

GENESIS 21:1-21

Introduction

The Apostles Peter, James, and Paul all illustrated the Christian life as an inheritance:

v 1 Peter 1:4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,

v James 2:5 Listen, my beloved brethren: Has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?

v Colossians 3:24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

Writing to the Church at Corinth, Paul also discusses some who are disinherited:

v 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Some will inherit; some are disinherited. What makes the difference?

Perhaps our text in Genesis Twenty-One can help us with the answer. Two sons are born to Abraham. One, Isaac, inherits; the other, Ishmael, is disinherited. The difference between them is in the manner of their *births*:

^ Isaac's birth is supernatural. Abraham and Sarah are both beyond the human ability to reproduce - yet God gives them Isaac in a miraculous way.

%o Ishmael's birth was altogether natural. Some sixteen years earlier Abraham had gone in to Hagar and she conceived.

The child with the supernatural birth inherits; the child with the natural birth is disinherited.

Do you see the application to your own life? Your first birth, your physical birth, is natural. Like Ishmael, you are born disinherited. The Bible speaks of a second birth, a supernatural birth. Through it, like Isaac, you enter into your inheritance.

#1 Like Isaac, You Enter Into Your
Inheritance By Supernatural Birth
(v1-8)

Genesis 21:1 And the LORD visited Sarah as He had said, and the LORD did for Sarah as He had spoken.

Genesis 21:2 For Sarah conceived and bore Abraham a son in his old age, at the set time of which God had spoken to him.

God visited Sarah and did what He had promised. He did it at the "set time."

The only difference between you and Sarah is that you often do not know God's "set time."

Genesis 21:3 And Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him; whom Sarah bore to him; Isaac.

Genesis 21:4 Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him.

Abraham did not forget God in this time of great blessing. He named his son with the name God Himself had given him, and he circumcised him according to God's previous instructions.

Don't forget God in times of blessing! God warned Israel, in Deuteronomy, of the grave danger that blessing brings - the danger of apathy. Maintain your spiritual habits.

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

God was glorified in Abraham's weakness. What is your weakness? It's probably something other than old age...Whatever it is, it is God's opportunity to glorify Himself.

Genesis 21:6 And Sarah said, "God has made me laugh, *and* all who hear will laugh with me."

The name Isaac means "laughter." Sarah had laughed with doubt when she first heard God promise her a son. Then she denied her laughter. Now her doubt and denial were turned into a devotion that others were delighted by!

Genesis 21:7 She also said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? For I have borne *him* a son in his old age."

Sarah desired to bring honor to her husband. As we have seen, Abraham was not the best husband a woman could hope for! Nevertheless she sought to honor him for the Lord's sake.

Genesis 21:8 So the child grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the same day that Isaac was weaned.

Abraham knew the day Isaac was to be weaned. It was on his calendar to observe. As he contemplated it, the idea to have a feast was formulated. I'm certain that Sarah was blessed by his involvement and thoughtfulness.

Mark days that are special to your spouse and children, then muse over them...God will bless your efforts with His inspiration to invest them with special meaning.

Isaac, even though the second born, entered into the inheritance. It is an illustration of *your* second birth. You are born-again and thereby enter into *your* spiritual inheritance.

You enter into your inheritance by grace. You enjoy your inheritance by growth. In verse eight, Isaac went from milk to solid food, from milk to meat. The Apostle Peter says, (1 Peter 2:2) "as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby..." The writer of the Book of Hebrews says, (Hebrews 5:13-14) "...everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

Enter by grace...enjoy by growth.

#2 Like Ishmael, You Are
Disinherited By Natural Birth
(v9-21)

Everyone is born disinherited from spiritual life with God. What you do "inherit" by your natural birth is a sin nature. You are physically alive at birth, but spiritually dead in trespasses and sins. You remain in that condition until, by the transforming power of the Gospel and by God the Holy Spirit, you are born a second time and given spiritual life. Ishmael illustrates this for us.

Genesis 21:9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, scoffing.

Being born to Abraham did not affect Ishmael's spiritual condition. You cannot inherit spiritual life from godly parents. He was now perhaps sixteen years old. He, too, had been circumcised years earlier...The physical

ritual alone had no affect on his heart. As a teenager his true nature was revealed - he mocked and laughed at the power, the promises, and the plan of God.

Genesis 21:10 Therefore she said to Abraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, *namely* with Isaac."

You are struck by how harsh Sarah is towards Ishmael and Hagar. I can't say what her motives were...But from God's response I *can* say that the situation called for hard counsel.

While you are never to be harsh, you may need to be hard in your counsel.

Genesis 21:11 And the matter was very displeasing in Abraham's sight because of his son.

Genesis 21:12 But God said to Abraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.

Genesis 21:13 "Yet I will also make a nation of the son of the bondwoman, because he *is* your seed."

Genesis 21:14 So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water; and putting *it* on her shoulder, he gave *it* and the boy to Hagar, and sent her away. Then she departed and wandered in the Wilderness of Beersheba.

Once Abraham received the Word of God he put his emotions aside and promptly obeyed. This was a difficult separation for him...Nevertheless he conceded to it as God's best. God said Hagar and Ishmael must go, and He must know. I wonder how many potential problems God has spared us by bringing about painful separations?

His painful separation from Ishmael was also a spiritual preparation for his sacrifice of Isaac - coming in Chapter Twenty-Two.

Genesis 21:15 And the water in the skin was used up, and she placed the boy under one of the shrubs.

Genesis 21:16 Then she went and sat down across from *him* at a distance of about a bowshot; for she said to herself, "Let me not see the death of the boy." So she sat opposite *him*, and lifted her voice and wept.

Abraham undoubtedly sent them off towards a settlement where they would find safety and shelter. Hagar and Ishmael apparently got lost. God sometimes deals with individuals severely in order to draw their attention to their true condition. They are lost and dying! God's mercies can seem severe mercies, and many times they are - but in the light of eternity they are precious to behold.

God had revealed Himself to Hagar earlier in Genesis; she may have been a believer. If so, you see that she was unprepared to instruct her son at an important moment in his life. In fact, she abandons him when she is most needed - thinking of her own grief, heaviness, and sorrow.

Genesis 21:17 And God heard the voice of the lad. Then the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said to her, "What ails you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Genesis 21:18 "Arise, lift up the lad and hold him with your hand, for I will make him a great nation."

God heard Ishmael. I don't know what Ishmael said. I do know that many cry out to God when all hope is lost.

Even though Ishmael spoke, it was to Hagar that God replied. When the unbeliever cries out God looks for someone close to them who has seen His glory to share with them.

Genesis 21:19 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.

It's a lesson in parenting for Hagar. God wants her to lead her son to the water that will give him life. She needs to have spiritual discernment in order to take advantage of situations that present Jesus as his only help and hope.

Genesis 21:20 So God was with the lad; and he grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer.

Was Ishmael saved in this encounter? After all, it says that "God was with the lad." I don't know. God is "with" everyone - in the sense that God the Holy Spirit is seeking to lead men, women, and children to faith in Jesus Christ. All men benefit from the common grace of God without all men receiving salvation by grace through faith. If Ishmael is an example of God's dealings with the unbeliever, it is a comfort to see how far God will go to reach even those who mock Him.

It is interesting that, seeing as Hagar went "across from *him* at a distance of about a bowshot," that Ishmael became an archer. His prowess with the bow would be a constant reminder to Hagar of God's faithfulness towards them. Every arrow he shot would take her mind back to their experience in the desert. Her son's aptitude should prompt her gratitude and keep her heart set on prayer.

Genesis 21:21 He dwelt in the Wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Egypt is always symbolic of the world and worldliness. Hagar encouraged him to marry an unbeliever. Wanting your children to be happy can hinder your perseverance in spiritual disciplines for them.

You are disinherited by natural birth. No relationship or ritual can save you. God is gracious to bring His severe mercies to bear, that you might understand you are a lost wanderer in a cruel desert wasteland.

Conclusion

Enter into your inheritance by grace...

Enjoy your inheritance by growing...