



Hagar

Sarah's Maid

Becomes the Mother Of A Nation

Compiled By Dr. Harold Bollinger

Overview

HAGAR, SARAH'S MAID BECOMES THE MOTHER OF A NATION

Hagar's story is told in Genesis 16-21. She is also mentioned in Galatians 4:24-25.

Escape of some kind is usually the most tempting solution to our problems. In fact, it can become a habit.

Hagar was a person who used that approach. When the going got tough, she usually got going—in the other direction.

However, it is worthwhile to note that the biggest challenges Hagar faced were brought on by other people's choices.

Sarah chose her to bear Abraham's child, and Hagar probably had little to say in the matter.

It isn't hard to understand how Hagar's pregnancy caused her to look down on Sarah. But that brought on hard feelings, and Sarah consequently punished Hagar.

This motivated her first escape. When she returned to the family and gave birth to Ishmael, Sarah's continued barrenness must have contributed to bitterness on both sides.

When Isaac was finally born, Sarah looked for any excuse to have Hagar and Ishmael sent away.

She found it when she caught Ishmael teasing Isaac.

In the desert, out of water and facing the death of her son, Hagar once again tried to escape. She walked away so she wouldn't have to watch her son die.

Once again, God graciously intervened. Have you noticed how patiently God operates to make our escape attempts fail? Have you begun to learn that escape is only a temporary solution?

Hagar was a servant of Abraham and handmaiden of Sarah.

Given by Sarah to Abraham to be his wife.

Genesis 16:1-3

But Sarai, Abram's wife, had no children. So Sarai took her servant, an Egyptian woman named Hagar, and gave her to Abram so she could bear his children.

"The Lord has kept me from having any children," Sarai said to Abram. "Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And Abram agreed.

So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram first arrived in the land of Canaan.)

Review and Understanding

Sarai, no longer expecting to have children herself, proposed to Abram to take another wife, whose children she might; her slave, whose children would be her property.

This was done without asking counsel of the Lord. Unbelief worked, God's almighty power was forgotten. It was a bad example, and a source of manifold uneasiness.

In every relation and situation in life there is some cross for us to bear: much of the exercise of faith consists in patiently submitting, in waiting the Lord's time, and using only those means which he appoints for the removal of the cross.

Foul temptations may have very fair pretences, and be colored with that which is very plausible.

Fleshly wisdom puts us out of God's way. This would not be the case, if we would ask counsel of God by his word and by prayer, before we attempt that which is doubtful.

Hagar misbehaves to Sarah

Genesis 16:4-6

So Abram slept with Hagar, and she became pregnant. When Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress Sarai with contempt.

Then Sarai said to Abram, "It's all your fault! Now this servant of mine is pregnant, and she despises me, though I myself gave her the privilege of sleeping with you. The Lord will make you pay for doing this to me!"

Abram replied, "Since she is your servant, you may deal with her as you see fit." So Sarai treated her harshly, and Hagar ran away.

Abram's unhappy marriage to Hagar very soon made a great deal of mischief.

We may thank ourselves for the guilt and grief that follow us, when we go out of the way of our duty.

See it in this case, Passionate people often quarrel with others, for things of which they themselves must bear the blame. Sarai had given her maid to Abram, yet she cries out, my wrong be upon thee.

That is never said wisely, which pride and anger put into our mouths. Those are not always in the right, who are most loud and forward in appealing to God: such rash and bold imprecations commonly speak guilt and a bad cause.

Hagar forgot that she herself had first given the provocation, by despising her mistress. Those that suffer for their faults, ought to bear it patiently.

1 Peter 2:20

Of course, you get no credit for being patient if you are beaten for doing wrong. But if you suffer for doing right and are patient beneath the blows, God is pleased with you.

The Angel Commands Hagar

Genesis 16:7-16

The angel of the Lord found Hagar beside a desert spring along the road to Shur. The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?"

"I am running away from my mistress," she replied.

Then the angel of the Lord said, "Return to your mistress and submit to her authority." The angel added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count."

And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard about your misery.

This son of yours will be a wild one—free and untamed as a wild donkey! He will be against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live at odds with the rest of his brothers."

Thereafter, Hagar referred to the Lord, who had spoken to her, as "the God who sees me," for she said, "I have seen the One who sees me!" Later that well was named Beer-lahairoi, and it can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.

So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old at that time.

Review and Understanding.

Hagar was out of her place, and out of the way of her duty, and going further astray, when the Angel found her.

It is a great mercy to be stopped in a sinful way, either by conscience or by providence. Whence comest thou? Consider that thou art running from duty, and the privileges thou was blest with in Abram's tent.

It is good to live in a religious family, which those ought to consider who have this advantage. Whither wilt thou go? Thou art running into sin; if Hagar return to Egypt, she will return to idol gods, and into danger in the wilderness through which she must travel.

Recollecting who we are, would often teach us our duty. Inquiring whence we came, would show us our sin and folly.

Considering whither we shall go, discovers our danger and misery. And those who leave their space and duty, must hasten their return, how mortifying whatsoever it be.

The declaration of the Angel, "I will," shows this Angel was the eternal Word and Son of God.

Hagar could not but admire the Lord's mercy, and feel, Have I, who am so unworthy, been favoured with a gracious visit from the Lord?

She was brought to a better temper, returned, and by her behaviour softened Sarai, and received more gentle treatment.

Descendants of Hagar

Genesis 25:12-15

This chapter is the history of the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham through Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian servant.

Here is a list, by their names and clans, of Ishmael's descendants: The oldest was Nebaioth, followed by Kedar, Abdeel, Mibsam, Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah.

Ishmael had twelve sons, whose families became distinct tribes. They peopled a very large country that lay between Egypt and Assyria, called Arabia.

The number and strength of this family were the fruit of the promise, made to Hagar and to Abraham, concerning Ishmael.

1 Chronicles, chapter five, gives an account of Ishmael.

Ishmael had twelve sons, whose families became distinct tribes. They peopled a very large country that lay between Egypt and Assyria, called Arabia. The number and strength of this family were the fruit of the promise, made to Hagar and to Abraham, concerning Ishmael.

Galatians 4:24-25

Now these two women serve as an illustration of God's two covenants. Hagar, the slave-wife, represents Mount Sinai where people first became enslaved to the law.

And now Jerusalem is just like Mount Sinai in Arabia, because she and her children live in slavery.

The difference between believers who rested in Christ only, and those who trusted in the law, is explained by the histories of Isaac and Ishmael.

These things are an allegory, wherein, beside the literal and historical sense of the words, the Spirit of God points out something further.

Hagar and Sarah were apt emblems of the two different dispensations of the covenant.

The heavenly Jerusalem, the true church from above, represented by Sarah, is in a state of freedom, and is the mother of all believers, who are born of the Holy Spirit.

They were by regeneration and true faith, made a part of the true seed of Abraham, according to the promise made to him.

Life Application

God's continual desire is for us to face our problems with his help. We experience his help most clearly in and through conflicts and difficulties, not away from them.

Are there problems in your life for which you've been using the "Hagar solution"?

Choose one of those problems, ask for God's help, and begin to face it today.

Key verse: "Then the angel of the Lord told her, 'Go back to your mistress and submit to her' " (Genesis 16:9).

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Verse Concept: Matthew Henry's Concept Bible Commentary.