

The Danger of Self-Reliance

The Bible teaches not just that salvation is by faith, but the Christian life is also by faith. What does it mean to live by faith?

How to Be Free in Christ

Understanding the story of Sarah and Hagar (Gen 16, Gen 21:9-10, NLT)

Gen 16:1-2,4 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. ² So Sarai said to Abram, “The LORD has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her.” And Abram agreed with Sarai’s proposal... ⁴ But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt.

Gen 21:9-10 When Isaac grew up and was about to be weaned, Abraham prepared a huge feast to celebrate the occasion. ⁹ But Sarah saw Ishmael—the son of Abraham and her Egyptian servant Hagar—making fun of her son, Isaac. ¹⁰ So she turned to Abraham and demanded, “Get rid of that slave woman and her son. He is not going to share the inheritance with my son, Isaac. I won’t have it!”

Defining “flesh” – vs. 23

*“Flesh” shows up 37 times in Galatians and Romans.
About 6 times the word means the human body or bloodline.
The other 31 times it means “the self apart from God”*

*“the self apart from God” → which is in union with Adam
“the self apart from God” → which is therefore in bondage to sin*

– Pastor Brian’s definition

Two mothers, two sons, two covenants, two Jerusalems, two religions, two outcomes

*Hagar, Ishmael, children of Sinai (first covenant), Jerusalem below, Judaism, and slavery
Sarah, Isaac, children of Abraham (new covenant), Jerusalem above, Christianity, freedom*

Why is self-effort religion slavery?

*It’s slavery because you have cut yourself off from assurance.
“Have I been good enough?”*

*It’s slavery because you have cut yourself off from God’s creativity. “
We’ve never done that before.”*

*It's slavery because you have cut yourself off from God's hope.
"I'm alone and if I don't take care of this, it's going to end badly."*

What does it mean to be free?

*Freedom means assurance through faith in Christ
Freedom means life in the power of the Spirit, through faith, creatively bringing light to a dark world.
Freedom means relationship, not rules*

How to do Great Things for God

Living by faith

*Isaiah 54:1 – The children of the desolate woman will be more than the children of her who is married.
Shall we live by flesh or spirit? Shall we walk in our own power or God's?*

Stories of faith

*George Mueller
Brother Andrew
Hope Fellowship*

Questions for Study and Reflection

1. What does it mean to live a life of faith? What does Abraham's life teach us?
2. What are the contrasts Paul presents allegorically to understand the Gospel? How does living in the promise provide freedom?
3. Why is self-effort religion slavery? How have you lived as a slave?
4. Do you have a personal story of God showing up for you when you put your faith in him? Do you have any favorite stories from Christian heroes, or maybe from friends or family?