

Free or Enslaved?

Genesis 21

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

We're studying the right way to live as it's evidenced in servants of God in the Old Testament, so we're going through the Old Testament chapter by chapter these Sunday evenings.

Most people in this world live the wrong way. They live the subnormal way, that is, they try to deal with the evil inside by suppressing it, controlling it and disciplining it and by trying to control the evil in their circumstances and in other people that they deal with by manipulating them. That is the subnormal way -- we call it the normal way, but that's the subnormal way that we are taught to deal with the evil in ourselves and in our circumstances and in other people. That's all it is -- it's just a manipulating of evil, it never actually overcomes evil. We find that in ourselves the evil is never really overcome, it is just held down for a little, but it bursts out later on in our lives or it bursts out in other places. You try to control it in regards to your temper, but it bursts out in jealousy. You try to control it in regards to lust, but it bursts out somewhere else in pride. So you find that all you're doing is manipulating and, with due respect to the doctors among us, it seems to me it's the same we do with our medicine -- it's always a second best.

We try and cut away the bad stuff and hope the good stuff grows better. We don't really take away though; we manipulate evil or we manipulate good hoping that that will overcome evil. That's the way we operate with evil in our circumstances and with evil in other people. We try to manipulate them, try to hold them off for awhile or twist the thing around so it doesn't have the effect that they want it to have on us. Somehow we never actually do eliminate evil. We never actually cure it. That's an utterly different way from the right way.

The right way is by faith. By confident belief that God has actually done what he said he has done. He said he has crucified the world in Jesus. That's what Paul says in Galatians 6:14; "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world." He states it plainly like that; "The world has been crucified to me." The world, the whole cosmos, the whole independent and complex system of profit, power, and success that people have set up to live without God, that whole system that works against us; that makes us suffer, that manipulates us, that pushes us in all kinds of ways, that has been crucified in Christ. The sting has been taken out of it and it has no power any longer to pervert God's will for our lives. By faith in that, by absolute confident faith that God has destroyed the world in Jesus, and then by acting on the basis of that, that's a completely different approach to life.

It might be good to take an example so that we are clear about that. Say there's a difficulty in the office or in your place of work. Somebody has told the boss something about you that isn't true and it is a hideous task to think how you are going to get that to work around right. Usually you go back and forth; using the ways of the world, "I will, well, maybe I won't say anything, and maybe he'll forget about it. Maybe I'll do something wonderful and he'll overlook it anyway. Maybe I should go to him and explain it or go to this person and explain it. Maybe I should get to the person next to the boss and tell them." We work all kinds of manipulations to try in some way to cut down the fallout from that error. The right way is not the way of passivity, which many of us interpret as faith. Many of us say we shouldn't take any action; we should just leave it in the

Lord's hands. What we mean by that is we should just be like Hindu's or Buddhists; we should be utterly passive, and whatever will be. We'll just let it happen. We can't do anything about it. We'll just sit here and be pummeled and say, "Lord I'm enjoying this. Praise God I'm enjoying this suffering." So, many of us are absolutely passive and interpret this as faith.

Loved ones, all that does is let the power of evil run free in our office situation. Use your faith and go before the Father to remind him of this situation he knows about already, and thank him. "Thank you Father that you have already worked all things according to your will in this situation. Thank you Lord, that you have already destroyed the power of the elemental spirits to use this lie that has been told to the boss to affect his attitude to me. Thank you Father that you, at this very moment, have destroyed the power of Satan to deceive the boss in regard to me, and that you are even now bringing home the right opinion of me, your opinion, thank you Father for that." Then get up from your knees in absolute peace and rest, trusting God to open the way for you to say what needs to be said, or for the Holy Spirit to prompt you to be quiet, or to speak at the right moment. That's what we mean loved ones.

In other words, it's not David moving a whole army against Goliath saying, "The only way to take care of this guy is to get thousands of us together in this heavy armor and to go for him all together." It's not that. It's not the way of manipulation or the way of the power of the flesh or our own strength or the ways the world uses. It's getting before God like David did and asking him what he wants to do in this situation, and then hearing God tell him, and resting in absolute peace and faith that in Jesus, Goliath fell and in the lamb that was slain from before the foundation of the world, that Giant was toppled. All we have to do is do what God tells us to do. The only purpose of our obedience is not actually to bring Goliath down with our little stone. The only purpose of our obedience is that it's by our obedience that God has chosen to manifest the victory of eternity here in time. Indeed, it's true that he cannot do it unless we perform the act of obedience.

It's the same with the walls of Jericho. It was not walking around the walls of Jericho that brought them down, it was an act of obedience to God that expressed to him our absolute faith that those walls came down, the protons and neutrons that held those walls together were placed in Jesus, the lamb that was slain before the foundation of the world, and they were rearranged by God, who foresaw that there would come a time when the Israelites would try to destroy Jericho. That has all been done.

Those protons and neutrons can all be rearranged here in time and space if we will show our faith in God by doing what he tells us to do however stupid that may appear in relationship to bringing the walls down. Loved ones that's what we're talking about. We're talking about that kind of faith. It's not passivity. It's a faith that's very full of action. It's full of actions that God directs us to take in light of absolute confidence that this all has been destroyed and made right in Jesus. Of course it transforms everything; like looking for a marriage partner or looking for a job. You start right from the beginning thanking God that he knows this was needed, and that he has already arranged it in Jesus. It's one of the things that Jesus achieved by his death and victory on Calvary, it's done already, "Lord I'll do what you tell me to do." Then you act in peaceful obedience so the action comes from a heart at peace and a heart of faith; not a heart that is worried or a heart that is anxious. That is really what we are talking about: our place is to live in that peaceable kingdom at God's right hand. Our place is to see that there is a place where we are to live in peace in Jesus at God's right hand where all these things have already been destroyed.

That's the kind of thing that happened to Abraham. God came to Abraham when he was seventy-five and said, "I have actually given you a son." Of course, Abraham was seventy-five, Sarah was sixty-five and they had no children of their own. God said, "I have come and given you a son and have made you the father of a great nation and indeed of many nations." He asked Abraham to believe him and keep believing him over a period of not one, two, three, or five years but of twenty-five years during which God strengthened Abraham's faith to have absolute confidence that only God could do this.

That's what I think is a great deal of what God has to do with us, loved ones. We're so uppity, and in our world we have educated ourselves to think we can do everything. If you put all the bridges, skyscrapers, and all the buildings that man has ever made together, it's a fraction of the cubic footage of the world as a whole. It's nothing. But we look at our bridges, cars and buildings and we think we're great, we can do everything; and we get bigger and bigger in our own eyes. A great deal of God's problem is to bring us down to the right size; to enable us to see that, actually, we can do nothing. I think one of our great problems is that we believe in the law of cause and effect. We really do think that if we drop that pencil we have caused it to fall. We really don't for a minute think that, that actually had nothing to do with it falling and that there are all kinds of laws of gravity that have to operate on that before it hits the ground and that the Father actually takes over the pencil and brings it to the ground to maintain some order for us poor little creatures who would go insane if there was no order. We are convinced that we threw the pencil down. God can make it go up if he wants, as we see when we look at the guys up in space. So we keep bluffing ourselves by this belief in the law of cause and effect. It's an easy way to describe things, but it's one of those laws of science that is only a partial explanation of things. Like when you get a balloon and fill it with hydrogen -- it doesn't drop to the ground and that baffles us because the balloon is really heavier than air itself. So our laws are intended to reinforce the idea in ourselves that we are gods. And a great deal of the Father's task is to allow us to face enough things over a long period of years until we see that only he can do it.

And that's what he did with Abraham. There came this great moment which we are at now in Genesis 21:1 when, after twenty-five years God fulfilled his promise -- not at all because he had to take twenty-five years -- but he wanted to make sure that Abraham and Sarah were absolutely convinced that although maybe a seventy-five year old man and a sixty-five year old woman could pull it off, a hundred year old man and a ninety year old woman couldn't. So when he was a hundred years of age, in Genesis 21:1, "The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him." So God had kept his promise. God is able to do that -- God is able to bring a child to birth by the power of Jesus' resurrection life.

I don't know if you're all absolutely clear on that or not. By Jesus, all of us were made and without him was not anyone made that was made. So your heart beats, actually the doctors can't explain why it beats. They can't explain what starts the thing. I believe it starts at the bottom and goes up; they can't really explain why it beats, but it beats. They say you're alive because your heart beats, it pumps the blood around, you breathe and all that. That was all created by Jesus. He created that. Actually we think it's our heart that keeps us alive, until we discover that we can stay alive even when the heart apparently stops beating. Then we say, it's the brain, and when the brain stops and you're really dead. But then we've seen people like the little guy that appeared to drown in Lake Michigan and he stayed alive. So we keep trying to say, "Yes, yes without this you can stay alive, and it keeps baffling us because we keep finding these people who died, who were legally dead, medically dead, and who keep coming alive. Of course the fact is, it's not the beating heart that keeps you alive; it's Jesus. It's like the bread and the fishes; he didn't need

the bread and the fishes to do the miracle and he doesn't actually need the heart to keep you alive. It's just out of kindness to us poor little people who would go scatty if we didn't see order in the world. He just lets the heart beat to let us know we're alive because our heart's beating, even though many of the people whose hearts are beating are not alive. It's his life that keeps us alive, but we are so dumb: we keep worshiping the gift instead of the giver. We keep depending on the things he uses to bring order into our lives, and we say when the heart stops that we're dead.

It's Jesus that keeps us alive. It's him that keeps us alive through his power and his resurrection life. The fact is that that resurrection life can manifest itself apart from your heart beating, apart from your brain waves, apart from everything else. That's why a baby could be born even if a loved one had passed the age of bearing children; because Jesus' Spirit was able to rejuvenate everything in a moment and then change it all in a moment. It is his power. The Savior can do anything at anytime and we probably have to grasp that fully. That's why God so lovingly gave us examples like this to show us, "There is nothing impossible to me. Nothing is too hard for the Lord because I made everything. Already I give you all kinds of examples in the world to show you that often I can go beyond what you call your laws. I can take Enoch, 'Behold, Enoch was not for the Lord took them.' He just was not. He just translated in an instant. I just took him up to show that man did not have to die." That's why he took Jesus up; to show that, "No you do not have to have a body lying in the grave. There is another way to leave this earth." All the time God is showing us in the Old Testament that he is able to act, and often does act, way beyond our natural laws.

He's so gracious to give us examples like that dad and that little boy that slid into Lake Michigan. There he was, that little guy, about twenty minutes under the water, and they dragged him out. I don't know if you saw the television record, but I thought it was like dragging a sack out. He was absolutely dead and yet the little fellow is alive today. God seems to give all those kinds of things to ease us out of our slavery to what is seen and what is heard. Don't say its science because a humble scientist like Einstein will say we understand so little. We think light is particles today and we think its beams tomorrow, and we think its ray's the next day. We change our laws as we find out more -- we know little or nothing, we're just groping around in the dark. It's the satanic power of deception that gets us to feel it must be this, or it must be that way. Of course what God does lovingly for us in the Old Testament is show us, "I am free. I can do it anyway at all that I choose, but I do need you to believe that I am greater then what you call my laws." And of course even "laws" is a foolish name, because a law of nature simply describes how nature appears normally to act. The fact is if we accounted for every unusual instance like the little guy that fell into Lake Michigan, we couldn't form laws. So what do we do? In order to preserve some little bit of order and in order to grip onto that, because we've stopped trusting our Father, we have to get little things that will give us confidence; so we create laws that don't really account for every instance at all.

I don't know if you know much about the philosophy of science, but the whole philosophy of inductive logic is that you don't account for every actual instance. You can't. You would have to make a separate law for almost every event. Most laws take the majority of events and they account for those. Of course we allow ourselves to be deceived by this. Really the only way to tackle the world is to see that it is created and held together by a loving and miraculous powerful Father who can do anything his nature allows him to do and that we are bound only by the nature of God, and not by what we call the "laws of nature" or the "laws of behavior" or the "laws of life." So that's why the Father gives us this.

Remember in verse 2 there came this happy moment, "And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in

his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of the son who was born to him, Isaac." Remember the dear kindness of God. We are so straight-laced and religious. We are so unlike God because God gave Abraham that name Isaac to give to his son, because Isaac in Hebrew means "laughter." God was saying, "You remember the time you laughed when I promised you a son?" That's back in Genesis 17:17. It's good to see how dear our Father is. He is such a dear person. Back in Genesis 17:17 when he told Abraham he would have a son, "Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" Of course, it wasn't the laugh of cynicism; it was the laugh of astonishment, the awe of the idea of it and the reality that, "Lord, do you really think it can be done?" It was then God said, "Yes, you'll have a son and you'll call him laughter." It was also a little reminder of another kind of laughter that he heard from Sarah a little later in Genesis 18. In verse 9 it's that human incident; "They said to him, 'Where is Sarah your wife?' And he said, 'She is in the tent.'" Remember this was when Jesus and the two angels came. "The Lord said, 'I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son. And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and advanced in age. It had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of woman. So Sarah laughed to herself saying, 'After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?' It was kind of the laugh of cynicism and unbelief in Sarah. "The Lord said to Abraham, 'Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? At the appointed time I shall return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son.' But Sarah denied, saying, " she was afraid; she knew it was unbelievable, 'I did not laugh' for she was afraid. He said, 'No, but you did laugh.'" God is so dear and so kind even to the laugh of cynicism that came from Sarah. So he had the last laugh, and said, "Call your son "laughter", since you two laughed."

I'll remind you of it loved ones; that's the way with God. If you walk in faith it's exciting and it's full of laughter and full of serendipities. If you walk by your own strength it's full of boring anti-climaxes and fore-gone conclusions. It is. Life apart from faith in God is full of strain and striving and long, long years put in with results that always seem so disappointing. But living by faith in God, and that he had resolved all things in your life in Jesus, that is a life of excitement and a life of unexpected surprises and pleasantries. This is of course what Abraham and Sarah experienced.

Look at Genesis 21:4, "And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him." So Abraham was getting the hang of obedience there, at last, "as God had commanded him." And it is so; if you live in obedience to God's impressions on your spirit then in fact you will experience what Abraham had experienced in verse 1: "The Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did to Sarah as he had promised." If you do to God as he commanded you; if you obey God, if you do the things he commands you, then he will do the things that he promised you. Our error is that we keep on asking him, "But why should we do that, or how will that bring this about?" Well it's like asking him how walking around the walls of Jericho seven times will bring the walls down. God just has to stand back and say, "If that's where you are in your relationship with me, I can't even begin to explain. You had better go back to kindergarten and we had better start from the beginning, and see that when I tell you to do a thing, you must do it in faith because I have reasons for it. If you do what I command you in obedience, then I will do what I promised you.

Loved ones I do think it's worth bringing up C.S. Lewis' dog again because it doesn't matter how many times we tell this and you laugh, we keep on doing the same thing. You remember C.S. Lewis; he was born in Belfast and lived not far from where I lived, up in the hills. He had a dog and he said, "Our dog never really obeyed us; he sometimes agreed with us." There's such a difference

there. We sometimes agree with God. That is, we sometimes think that is a pretty sensible thing to do so we'll do it, but if it doesn't seem like a pretty sensible thing to do we don't do it. So we don't really obey God, we just agree with him at times. Then we wonder why his promises are not being made real in us. Of course the reason is because we are not really obeying him. So Abraham was beginning to learn.

In verse 5, "Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, 'God has made laughter for me; every one who hears will laugh over me.'" The Hebrew is "Everyone who hears will laugh to me, will laugh with me." And that's the beauty of God's ways with us -- it's a rejoicing way. I don't know if you knew anything about Saint Francis of Assisi. They called him and his group *Jongleurs de Dieu* in French, "the Jugglers of God." They were troubadours; they were always playing guitars and singing around the town. In fact there was one guy that had such delight in the thought of the Virgin Mary that he used to turn backwards summersaults! That's the kind of joy that God fills you with when you delight in him, and delight in his work, and delight in his miracles. If you live this way, you live in the joy of Jesus all the time.

Tomorrow I'll do a funeral, the most joyous funeral I will probably ever do. I have a dear sister in Jesus that I got to know twenty years ago when I came to America. At that time she was at the very young age of seventy-seven, so she is now ninety-seven, and she went to be with Jesus last Tuesday. I'm going to do her funeral service tomorrow. She's joyful, joyful all the time. Her name is Anna Steinsen. I always think of her as Mrs. Steinsen because she always seems to me a saintly woman. She is joyful, so very joyful and has lived in the victory over self for, I think fifty, sixty or seventy years. She is just a delight and has always been. She used to live in a house where they started the airport runway in exactly the direction pointing towards her house. It was wild when the 747's came in. They were so low even the windows shook. It was terrible. This house had been her house for years. I think she was then at the young age of eighty-seven, you'd expect this to be annoying to her. She would just say, "Oh no, that's good; it's a message from the Lord for me to pray for each person in that plane each time it goes over." That's what happens when you live in faith in God. It's just a great experience.

I remember once, I could go on forever with stories of this lady, I remember once my wife and I were invited over to the home where she was, to spend the afternoon with her. She was at that time eighty-four and her friends were all eighty – eighty-four too. It was the greatest afternoon we ever had. It was so full of fun and so full of laughter. They were all in the same glorious relationship with God; nothing was a burden and nothing was an agony, even though some of them couldn't see as well as they could before. It is a delightful way for us. It's a way filled with joy. There's a song called "I discovered a way of gladness" and there is a way of gladness to live everyday of life. It is in this faith.

Verse 7, "And she said, 'Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would suckle children? Yet I have born him a son in his old age.' And the child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that the Isaac was weaned." Then loved ones we come into this sad side of the record which concerns Hagar. You may remember that after ten years of waiting for God's promise of a gift of a son Sarah said to Abraham, "I am passed the age of bearing children. Now it looks to me that if God is going to give you a son, it can't be by me. So I have a maid Hagar. Why don't you go in to her and have intercourse with her and that will be your son. Perhaps that's the way God is going to give you a son." Abraham weakened; I suppose he was deceived, because I don't think he was ever rebellious against God. I think he believed God, but I think he was deceived by the loved one that was close to him and thought, "Yeah that's reasonable. That would still be my son and would

still be God's promise made real." So he began to try and help God out to do the thing by his own strength, by the power of the flesh, by his own determination and his own will. He went in to Hagar and they produced a son called Ishmael. The sad result of that strong act of independence by Abraham was that Sarah actually became jealous and determined that she must get rid of Hagar and Ishmael, and they were cast out of the home. That's always the result when you try to bring about God's will by your own power or your own will instead of by his power and by his faith in him. Of course this just carries on that sad record in verse 9; "But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had born to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac." This son she is speaking of was Ishmael; he was about fifteen or sixteen at this time. And the Hebrew word doesn't mean just "playing with her son Isaac" but actually "making fun of Isaac." So Sarah saw this and to her this was a continuation of the error that was made back then. Verse 10, "So she 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.' And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son." Because Ishmael was Abraham's son and it really wasn't the attitude to take. But its interesting that God goes along with the thing even though the motive is wrong, because he has something to work out of this.

Sometimes you and I are too picky. We think, "Oh, no, the motive isn't right." We have to remember what Paul said, "Listen; whether it's preaching Christ out of jealousy or envy they're preaching Christ." Often God will allow certain things to go through that won't pass the close inspection of our very ethical, moral ideals, because God knows what he is after. He knows what particular sin he's dealing with in what particular person. Loved ones, it's up to us to be very humble in our estimate of what is right and what is wrong. "But God said to Abraham, 'Be not displeased because of the lad and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your descendants be named.'" In other words, "Have no fear. You have nothing to fear about Ishmael." Verse 13, "And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." If you walk with God, it's amazing how many people will be blessed because of your faith. It's incredible; if you trace the lives of godly fathers and mothers how even sons and daughters that actually abandon God have sons and daughters that are blessed because of the grandparent's original faith and trust. So it's interesting that God even made a great nation of Ishmael because Abraham was the father. And it's amazing that God will often do it with you; your works will follow you down through the years.

Do you remember in the movie "Chariots of Fire" in the funeral in the very beginning of the movie the old words of the funeral service were read "and their works do follow them?" Of course it was very obvious that Eric Liddle's works followed him down through the years. Your works will follow you far beyond the effect of your own present life. That is what happened here; God made a great nation of Ishmael and that is the Arab nation. The Arab nation still looks upon Abraham as their original forefather because they were born of Ishmael; "And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring." The Arabs exist today as a part of the blessing that God gave to Abraham in the old covenant. "So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went, and sat down over against him a good way off, about the distance of bowshot; for she said, "Let me not look upon the death of the child." You normally think that's a good end to the story because that person shouldn't have lived in God's eyes. But God is so good and nothing is ever wasted; God uses everything for good. "And as she sat over against him, the child lifted up his voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad." Isn't that dear? That's very kind.

"And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not; for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him fast with your hand; for I will make him a great nation. 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. And God was with the lad, he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt." And Ishmael begat the whole Arab race with all the blessings that I have seen that race has had, yet in a strange way with all the promises that God made back there when Ishmael was first born. He said, "Every man's hand will be against him. They will feud with each other all the time." So the Arabs have feuded with each other over the years, but they are part of the blessing that God gave to Abraham.

Loved ones, what is in this for us? Something very real if you'll look at Galatians 4: 22, it is again one of those great experiences we have in the Bible where God comments in one part of the Bible about another part, and helps us to interpret the Old Testament. "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh," that was Ishmael, "the son of the free woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai," the covenant of law, where you try to obey God by your own power. You believe that he has forgiven you, as the Old Testament people believed. You remember the Psalmist who said "Blessed is the man whose sin is covered and to whom the Lord imputed not iniquity." So there are those great psalms that make it very clear that people in the Old Testament knew the forgiveness of sins, but they didn't have any power to obey; so they tried to obey by their own flesh and their own will-power. "One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery;" because that's what you end up in. You end up in the kind of slavery that cries out, "The good that I would I cannot do; and the evil I hate is the very thing I do." That is man under the law. He cries out because he's trying to obey God's will by his own will and by his own strength. "Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem for she is in slavery with her children." So any loved one that is in carnal Christianity and is in the experience of carnal faith is in slavery and is part of Hagar, and part of that desire in man to obey God by his own power. Verse 26 "But the Jerusalem above is free and she is our mother." That is; Jesus destroyed and raised up to God's right hand; free and able to live above sin. Then in verse 28, "Now we, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise."

I had asked you if you were a child of promise. Have you come to that place where you have at last said, "Lord, it's not just the wrong things that I'm doing; I myself am all wrong. I'm all wrong. There's a self in here that has to be destroyed, Lord. It has to be taken away completely. I have to lose the good and the bad on the cross in Calvary if anything is going to come inside me that will obey you." 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. So it is that the power of the flesh inside us strives against the power of the spirit and actually persecutes it. So often you are anxious to do what is right, but the fear of man strives inside you and says, "No, don't speak out, you'll spoil your reputation." You want to get up and do something for God, but the power of indolence and laziness and self-indulgence comes up and says, "No, no, don't do it."

So the power of the flesh still persecutes the spirit. Verse 30, "But what does the scripture say? And this is the message to us: "Cast out the slave and her son; for the son of the slave shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." So the power of your flesh shall never inherit the kingdom that God is giving to the power of the spirit. "So, brethren, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman." In other words, you have to cast out the slave before you can bring in the free

man. You have to cast out the Ishmael before you can receive in your Isaac. That's it loved ones. To come into victory yourselves, you have to be prepared to let go of everything of self-strength and self-power and self-will. You have to say, "I'm nothing, I let that all be destroyed. I cast out completely that slave Ishmael. Now, Lord, I ask you to create in me -- you who call things into being that do not exist -- I ask you to create in me a new Isaac that is able to walk after you."

Loved ones that's what we need to do ourselves. There will only be victory in your life and mine when we cast out the son of the slave woman; that Ishmael within us; that power of the flesh which you think you can use to obey God. The fact is the scripture is true; the mind of the flesh is enmity against God. It is not subject to God's law neither indeed can it be. When you try to use the power of the fleshly mind or the power of your own will or the power of your own determination to obey God you're using something that is by nature, inherently against God. It is against God; it will not obey God, it doesn't want to obey God. I think some of us make the error that we think that the carnal self is just something that is a little bit of a nuisance. It isn't loved ones; it is a creeping, subtle part of Satan that will do anything as long as it can stay alive. It will play at religion, it will sing hymns, it will allow you to go to Bible studies, it will allow you to do all kinds of things even to yearn for the fullness of the Holy Spirit; as long as it can stay alive. The only thing it cannot bear is the thought of you allowing the Holy Spirit to put it on the cross with Jesus. If you ask me how you do that; you simply ask the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit, in what way am I holding this carnal self of mine off Jesus' cross? In what way am I doing it, just show me Holy Spirit." He will gently show you. It may be something as irrelevant as walking around Jericho to bring down the walls. If you obey him in that, the Holy Spirit will give you more light, and then will bring you to the place where he reveals that that old self that was crucified with Christ and it will suddenly become real to you and you'll cast out the son of the slave woman, and you'll receive in the son of the free woman. And you live in that freedom. That's God's will for each one of us. That's what he has written it all through this dear book.

Let's pray.

Dear Father, we thank you for the way you dealt with Abraham and we thank you for the promise that you gave him. We thank you for showing us plainly that you kept that promise. Father you have promised that you would write your law in our inward parts; that you would take away this heart of flesh and you would give us a heart that is open to your Spirit. Father we believe that you keep your promises and that you are only waiting for us to do as Abraham did; to do what you command us, and then you will do what you have promised us.

So Father, we come to you this evening, we ask you, by your Holy Spirit, to give us light about this old carnal self. We ask you, Holy Spirit, to make it clear to us in what way we are keeping it alive. Lord we think of it as ourselves. We don't think of it as something that works against us; it's so subtle that we think it's just us. Yet we know, Lord, that it is something that you are able to separate from us. That we ourselves can still be recreated alive after that old self, which seems so much a part of us, has been nailed to the cross. So Holy Spirit, we tell you that we want that: we want to be finished with that self. We want no right to take it back to us. We want no right to do what it wants us to do; we want to be yours completely. So we ask you to bring us into that blessed place of crucifixion with Christ and resurrection with him and ascension with him into the heavenly places where we can begin to live this life of faith where we triumph over evil in ourselves, in others, and in our circumstances through our faith and confidence that you have already crucified the world. We have nothing to fear but only a life of joy to live.

Father, we thank you. We thank you, Lord, that unless we cast out the overpowering life of Satan within us, we cannot really cast him out in our circumstances. So Lord first we ask you now to enable us to accept our position in Jesus on the cross. Lord Jesus, then will you take us on up with you into the heavenly places for your glory.

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us now, and evermore. Amen