

Series: Questions
Title: What Aileth Thee?
Text: Genesis 21: 17
Date: December 20, 2012
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Genesis 21:17 And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

Here we have another question which God asks a sinner. The angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven. The angel of God is Christ, God the Son. Here is his question to Hagar and our title.

Title: **What Aileth Thee?**

Proposition: We will use this passage as an illustration or allegory of how God converts a sinner by Christ in covenant grace.

I. OUR SIN SEPARATES US FROM GOD

Genesis 21: 9: And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. **10:** Wherefore she said unto Abraham, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac.

Hagar and Ishmael an Allegory of Works

Ishmael, Hagar's son, who was around seventeen years old, was mocking Isaac, Sarah's son. By the Spirit of God, Paul used Hagar, and the way Ishmael was born by works, as a picture of the covenant of works. And her son, Ishmael, as a picture of a the those attempting to come to God by the works of the law. Sara is a picture of the covenant of grace and her son, Isaac, is a picture of a child born of God's covenant grace.

Galatians 4: 28: Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. 29: But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. 30: Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. 31: So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

The Covenant of Works

The covenant of works is the law given of God on Mt. Sinai.—God said, “Do this and live.” Not because God expected we could, but to show us we could not. The law was given to show us our sin, to shut our mouths, and make us see we are guilty before God and need Christ who is the Righteousness of God.

Romans 3: 19: Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

All are born into this world, sinners. All of our sin, especially the sin of attempting to find acceptance with God by our obedience to the law, is a mocking of God, of Christ, of salvation by covenant grace, and of his people, like as Ishmael mocked Isaac. All who attempt to come to God by our works shall be cast out, as was

Hagar and Ishmael. Our sins have separated us from God. God is not to blame if we perish. We are. Our sins separate us from God.

II. GOD SAVES BY COVENANT GRACE

Genesis 21: 11: And the thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son. 12: And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. 13: And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

In Isaac Shall Thy Seed Be Called

“In Isaac shall thy seed be called” means through Isaac, Christ the promised Seed, the Savior, would come into the world.

Galatians 3:16: Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

And it means that all God's the true children, the true children of Abraham, are the elect of God, chosen of God the Father unto salvation in Christ Jesus before the world was made and called, and called to faith in Christ in time.

Romans 9: 7: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. 8: That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.

Galatians 3:7: Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham...29: And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

So Hagar and Ishmael must be cast out because it is not by our works that sinners are saved but by the promise of God's grace.

Romans 4:13: For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. 14: For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:

The Gospel

In order for God to receive all the glory in the salvation of a sinner, God must do all the work. God the Father chose his people and gave them to Christ. God the Son, Christ came, made of a woman—Christ Jesus—made under the law. Christ redeemed all those given to him from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us on the cursed tree. God the Holy Spirit regenerates each one through the gospel and calls us, giving us faith in Christ in whom the believer is made the righteousness of God, accepted of God and complete.

Ephesians 1: 3: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: 4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: 5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, 6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. 7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to

the riches of his grace; 8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; 9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Hagar and Ishmael an Allegory of Grace

Staying with Ishmael and Hagar, I want to use them as an illustration of God's grace and work upon those he truly saves.

Genesis 21: 13: And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed.

God made Ishmael the father of the Arabs. Were Ishmael and Hagar saved eternally by God's grace? I don't know. In Paul's allegory, they stand as a picture of works, but as concerning them personally, I do not know. But we will use what God did here, as a picture of God converting his child of grace.

God said, "I will do this for Ishmael"—all the work of making his elect to be his holy nation is the work of God. God said, "Because he is thy seed"—like as God did this for Ishmael because he was the son of Abraham, God saves his elect because we are the sons of Christ our Everlasting Father—for the sake of Christ God saves those Christ has redeemed. God saves by covenant grace.

III. GOD FIRST GETS HIS CHILD LOST

Genesis 21: 14: And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and took bread, and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away: and she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.

Bondage in Rebellion

God provides his children with temporal blessings in this earth, even while we are lost. Hagar was given bread and a bottle of water. She had her son, Ishmael. When sent away, she departed, free from God's house, free from serving Sarah.

Unregenerate sinners go through this life feeling like they have all they need. Like she had what she needed to eat God provides temporal blessings to his elect child even while we are in our rebellion. Hagar had her son which was the fruit of her works. Sinners in religion and out go through this life producing many works of their hands by which they think God will receive them. Hagar was free from being the servant of Sarah. Sarah pictures the covenant of grace. Many, even some who claim to be saved by grace, have not submitted to Christ. They are trying to come to God mixing law and grace. They are free from being the servants of righteousness, not under grace but under the law. But that is no freedom at all! Hagar and Ishmael were in bondage. Note verse 14 says that everything was on Hagar's shoulder. That is bondage, not the liberty of knowing all is in Christ's hands.

Sinner, we don't want everything to be on our shoulder. The believer has the peace of knowing all is on Christ's shoulder.

Isaiah 9:6: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace.

Christ finds his lost sheep, “And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.”
(Luke 15: 5)

Outside of Christ, we have only earthly bread and water, our works are filthy rags, we are the servants of sin. By grace through faith in Christ, we have Eternal Life, the bread of Christ’s broken body and shed blood, the water of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death.

The Law our School Master

Note verse 14 says, “**She wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba.**”

Abraham had already dug a well of water, called Beersheba.

Gen 21: 22: And it came to pass at that time,...

God gives us details in verses 22-34 about the well called Beersheba. Abraham had dug this well beforehand. He had given seven ewe lambs as a covenant that he had dug that well. Seven is the number of perfection. The lamb is a type of Christ the Lamb. Beersheba means covenant. The well of Beersheba was a picture of the everlasting covenant of grace made by God in Christ before the world was made. That everlasting covenant was perfectly ordered and sure in Christ the Lamb of God who was slain for the elect of God from the foundation of the world. Christ is the Well of Life.

So get this picture. Abraham the Father of the faithful, like God the Father, sent Hagar out in the direction of that well with just enough water to get to that well. That water and bread Abraham gave her would not sustain her. She had to get to that well. Hagar was forced, driven, to that well because out that well of Beersheba—the well of covenant—she would be provided all the water she needed.

Galatians 3: 24: Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25: But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

God gives his child the law—to declare us guilty—driving us to the Fountain, to Christ our Life. But left to herself, Hagar wandered. Hagar could not find the well. So it is God will not let his child glory that we found Christ ourselves.

Illustration: “I found Jesus!”

IV. GOD BRINGS US TO THE END OF OURSELVES

Genesis 21: 15 And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs. 16: And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot: for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.

God Strips his Elect of all our Works

We will take the things God has given us to drive us to Christ and instead try to come to God by those things. Sinners look into the law of God and try to come to God by their obedience to it. But God uses his law to strip us. Her water ran out-- **the water was spent in the bottle.**

God brings us down to the dust and separates us from all our works by making the fruit we boasted of to come to nothing—her son, her fruit, Ishmael—was withered and near death. God will make us repent from our works—**she cast the child under one of the shrubs. And she went, and sat her down over against him a good way off, as it were a bowshot for she said, Let me not see the death of the child.**

God gives us a desire for the living water by giving us this dryness like as she was in that desert without water. And God gives us a thirst for living water. When he bring us to the end of ourselves it cause us great sorrow--**she sat over against him, and lift up her voice, and wept.**

V. GOD BRING US TO CONFESS OUR SIN

Genesis 21: 17: And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar out of heaven, and said unto her, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not; for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.

God Gives his Child the Gospel

Remember, before this, when the Lord found Hagar by the fountain, the Lord promised her he would bring a great nation from Ishmael. She had the promise of the Lord that the child would not die but be made a great nation. Yet, there she sits weeping, thinking the child will die, that God's promise had failed.

Believer, do we not find ourselves in this same place many times. Though we have heard the promise of God: that he has given us his Son, that Christ has justified us of all our sins, that we are made the righteousness of God in Christ, and that Christ will freely with him give us all things. Yet, we find ourselves weeping as if God's purpose of grace can be frustrated. Why?

When we are looking to our strength, to our fruits, we mock God. We try to live of earthly bread and earthly water. We wander in this wilderness acting as if freedom is wandering in the wilderness. And when we do, God brings us to the end of ourselves, just like he did when he converted us in the beginning. God graciously converts his child a thousand times in our lifetime, bringing us to repent from ourselves to him continually.

Illustration: Peter, when you are converted strengthened my brethren.

God brings us to Confess our Sin is Us

Are you a sinner brought to the end of yourself? Are you a believer brought to the end of yourself again? Why has God done this for you? The angel of the Lord, Christ our Savior says, "What aileth thee, Hagar?" We can put our name in the place of Hagar's name. What aileth thee?

In this series we have heard God ask sinners questions to bring us to confess the problem is us:

- "Adam, where art thou?" He was hiding from God because he sinned.
- "Cain, why are you angry?" He was angry because Cain was rejected for not coming to God in the blood of Christ and Abel was accepted because he did.
- "Cain, where is your brother?" He killed him because Abel was righteous and Cain was not. Where is your elder Brother, Christ?

- “Hagar, from whence camest thou? And where wilt thou go?” She was running from the house of God, forsaking the one house where God’s gospel was in the earth and fleeing back to Egypt.
- “Sarah, is anything too hard for the Lord?” Sarah’s problem was she doubted the ability of God to make good on his promise.

Now, Christ asks, “What aileth thee, Hagar?” She has to answer, “Me.” God always brings us to confess our sin. The problem is us—our flesh. We have to be saved from us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.

Fear Not, God Hath Heard

Then Christ says, “**Fear not.**” You’ve heard the gospel. You have heard the promise of salvation by Christ and in Christ—so fear not. God chose us by his grace. His grace is unchanging. Therefore, though we sin, Christ says, “Fear not.”

Hagar cried. You and I cry when God has brought us to beg for mercy. But who did God hear? “**She lifted up her voice and wept. And God hath heard the voice of the lad.**” So Christ called to her and said **fear not for this reason, “for God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is.”** God hath heard and God knows our need because Christ hath heard our cry. And Christ has brought our petitions before the Father. And God hath heard Christ where he is. And for the sake of Christ where he is, for the sake of our Advocate where he is with the Father, for the sake of our Propitiation where he is at God’s right hand, for the sake of the Lord our Righteousness seated at the right hand of God, God hath heard.

1 John 2: 1: My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: 2: And he is the propitiation for our sins:...

1 Timothy 2:5: For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Hebrews 9:24: For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:

Ephesians 2:18: For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

VI. THEN CHRIST SPEAKS IN SAVING POWER

Genesis 21: 18: Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation. 19: And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.

Christ Speaks by the Gospel

After he brings us down, only Christ can lift us up. He does so by his Word, by his gospel, by his power, speaking into our hearts, saying, “Arise, lift up the lad and hold him in thine hand.” Christ is our strength to arise. Christ is our strength to lift up Christ in saving faith to the Father, not coming to the Father in our works but putting all our confidence in him and him alone. Christ is our strength to lay hold of Christ and the strength by whom we hold Christ and never let him go.

Christ Speaks in Covenant Promise

Christ speaks his covenant promise into our broken and contrite heart reminding us that for the sake of Christ God will make Christ a great nation, “for I will make him a great nation.” In order to do so, Christ has come and justified us, washed us, robed us and crowned us. We are his holy nation, his royal priesthood that he might be the firstborn among many brethren, that Christ might be the King of kings and Lord of lords of his holy nation made up of a multitude which he saves from every kindred, tongue and people on this earth. Therefore, God promises to supply all our need for the sake of Christ our King.

Christ is our Light

Christ is the Light that opens our blind eyes, “And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water.” Christ is there all along, like as the well of water was there the whole time. But we do not see Christ until God opens our eyes. He gets all the glory!

When God has brought us to the dry dust of our flesh then given us eyes to behold Christ the Fountain of Living Waters—do you think a sinner has to be bribed to believe on Christ. Nope! “And she went, and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad drink.”

John 7:38: He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

VII. IN THE END, GOD SHALL FULFILL ALL HIS PROMISES TO US

Genesis 21: 20: And God was with the lad; and he grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer. 21: And he dwelt in the wilderness of Paran: and his mother took him a wife out of the land of Egypt.

2 Corinthians 1:20: For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

2 Samuel 23:5: Although my house be not so with God; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he make it not to grow.

Do you see that everything Christ promised Hagar he would do, he did. So it is with the elect of God whom Christ has redeemed and the Spirit has called. God shall fulfill every covenant promise he has made to you who believe.

GO HOME REMEMBERING WHAT WE HAVE SEEN HERE:

1) **Our sin separates us from God**—Hagar and Ishmael mocked Isaac. Don't mock Christ by looking to your will and your works, turn from everything about you and believe on Christ.

2) **God saves by covenant grace**—all this was done for the sake of another. God saves for his own glory, for the sake of Christ, because he promised Christ a people before the foundation of the world and Christ finished the work.

3) **God first gets his child lost before he saves**—in driving her to the fountain she first became lost in the wilderness.

4) **God brings us to the end of ourselves**—the water was spent, she was separated from her fleshly fruits, brought down to the dust then she cried to God

- 5) **God brings us to confess our sin**—Christ the angel of the Lord asked her, “What aileth thee?”
- 6) **Christ speaks in saving power**—“Arise; he makes and continually renews his promise in our hearts; he opens our eyes to behold Christ the fountain of living waters then we drink in faith.
- 7) **In the end, we shall see God fulfill all his promises to us.** We will see Christ our King and all his holy nation saved and none lost.

Then both now and for all eternity we will have but one thing to say about all that he has done for us so freely by his grace.

Revelation 5: 12: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing...13: Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Amen!