

Series: Hope For Hard Cases

THE BROKEN HEARTED MOTHER

GENESIS 21:9-21

Text:

Introduction:

The Bible is a book of hope.

It is a book with a message of grace, peace, salvation, redemption, and miracles.

Yet, the Bible is a book filled with impossible, hopeless situations. Stories appear on the pages of God's Word, and many of them are impossible situations humanly speaking.

Storms, needs, deaths, sicknesses, and many other problems appear, that to the human mind are impossible and hopeless, yet time after time these impossible, hopeless situations are handled with ease by the power of God.

One of those stories is in the text we have read today. Let's look into this passage that details a hopeless situation in the life of a woman named Hagar.

The story opens in the home of a man named Abraham. Abraham and Sarah had been facing what

they thought was an impossible in not having a descendent and taking matters into their own hands in trying to assist God in their desire and His previous promise.

Abraham may have been the father of the faithful, but His family life was a shambles – Abraham, Sarah and Hagar.

Sarah was jealous of Hagar and her baby; Hagar was jealous of Sarah and her relationship with Abraham; poor Abraham is caught in the middle trying to please them both.

Our world is still paying the price for their foolish choices.

I want to focus in on the question the Lord asks Hagar in verse 17, “What alieth thee?”

Let’s consider the lessons that present themselves in this passage as we examine “The Case of the Broken Hearted Mother.”

Note:

1. IT WAS A TIME OF HARSH REJECTION (VS. 8-14)

Things had been tense in Abraham's tent for many years. In this passage, Isaac is about three and Ishmael is about seventeen. They are celebrating as Isaac matures from a baby to a little boy, vs. 8.

Genesis 21:8

⁸ And the child grew, and was weaned: and Abraham made a great feast the same day that Isaac was weaned.

A. The Reason For This Rejection (vs. 9-10)

Genesis 21:9-10

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.

Ishmael was mocking and making fun of Isaac and the festivities.

Ishmael saw all his hopes of inheritance dashed in Isaac.

- He knew that Isaac was the son of promise and that he was just the son of a slave.

- He realizes that he will never be anything more than he is right now.
- He is jealous of Isaac, so he acts out during the feast.

Sarah sees this and gets upset and demands that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away!

I would just mention that “to mock” Isaac was a serious matter to the Lord. To “mock” him was to:

- Mock God’s People

Isaac was the one through whom the nation of Israel would come

- Mock God’s Promise

Isaac was the son of promise. He was the miracle baby

- Mock God’s Power

Isaac came into the world because God’s was greater than old age, dead wombs, and the abilities of men

- Mock God Provision

It would be through Isaac that the Messiah would come into the world

Note not only “The Reason for This Rejection” but also

B. The Realities of this Rejection (vs. 11-14)

Genesis 21:11-14

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. 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.

Abraham is reluctant to do what Sarah is demanding that he do.

This was still his son, and was the idea of Sarah.

God tells him that it is part of His plan for both Isaac and for Ishmael.

He is forced to send away his oldest son and that son's mother.

It broke his heart to have to send them away.

The word “Grievous” means “to tremble or quiver.” This event shook Abraham to his very foundations. There is no doubt that he loved Ishmael, and that he certainly had feelings for Hagar.

This was a hard morning for Abraham, but an even harder morning was coming!

In the next chapter God will command Abraham to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah, Gen. 22.

Abraham honored the Lord in both cases and did what the Lord told him to do.

Sending Ishmael away was merely preparation for greater service.

No doubt if Abraham had refused to give up Ishmael, he would have never been willing to give up Isaac.

We all know that life can be like that at times. Things are going well one moment and the next; we are on our backs, looking up, wondering how we got there. This life is filled with hard realities and heartbreaking moments.

This “Was a Time of Harsh Rejection” but also:

2. IT WAS A TIME OF HOPELESS REALITIES (vs. 15-16)

Note:

A. There Were Problems (vs. 14-15)

Genesis 21:14-15

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. ¹⁵ And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs.

I think it's because he was taking God at His word. He simply released Ishmael and Hagar into the hand of God, and He trusted God to do right by them.

They are in a desperate situation! But, that's how life can be at times.

Not only were there problems but also:

B. There Was Pain (vs. 16)

Genesis 21:16

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.*

Hagar's heart is broken. She is sure Ishmael is going to die.

She leaves him under a bush and she goes away because she does not want to witness the death of her son.

A “**bowshot**” is about 1000 feet. Hagar leaves Ishmael there and she goes off to weep.

She found herself in a situation she could not fix and from which she could not escape.

Hagar shouldn't have worried. She had the promise of God that He was going to make Ishmael the father of a great nation, Gen. 16:10-11.

He wasn't going to die out there in that wilderness. In that moment of desperation, Hagar's pain blinded her to God's promise.

Not only was their problems and pain but also:

C. There Was Prayer (vs. 16-17)

Genesis 21:16-17

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.* 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.*

We don't know whether Hagar prayed or not, but Ishmael certainly did. God heard him and moved to help him. By the way, the name "Ishmael" means "God Hears."

Many years ago, A.W. Tozer said, "The devil, things, and people being what they are, it is necessary for God to use the hammer, the files, and the furnace in His holy work of preparing a saint for true sainthood. It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply."

If the Lord is going to develop you into the image of Christ He will do so through the events of your life.

He will send us exactly what it takes to transform us into the person He saved us to be.

This was a time of harsh rejection and hopeless realities but also:

3. IT WAS A TIME OF HIDDEN RESOURCES (vs. 17-21)

When Hagar went through this time of terrible tragedy, she was surrounded by some very precious hidden resources.

God had just what she needed.

Note:

A. God's Providence (vs. 12-13)

Genesis 21:12-13

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.

God had a plan in all of this.

Note in Galatians 4 Paul speaks of this as an illustration of salvation.

Galatians 4:21-31

²¹ Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? ²² For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. ²⁴ Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. ²⁵ For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. ²⁶ But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. ²⁷ For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. 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.

- Sarah is a picture of the grace of God.
- Hagar is a picture of the law of works.
- Isaac is a picture of faith.
- Ishmael is a picture of the flesh

The lesson here in Galatians 4 is clear:

- Grace and Law are incompatible, and so are the flesh and faith.
- Ishmael represented the efforts of the flesh, and he had to go so that the son of faith, Isaac might obtain his rightful place.

The pain and the suffering were both a part of God's plan.

God has a plan and sometimes it involves us walking through some hard places.

He knows what He is doing. Until you walk through the valley, you cannot appreciate the mountain top.

Note not only God providence but also:

B. God's Presence (vs. 17)

Genesis 21:17

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.

She didn't know it, but God had been there the whole time.

By the way, He won't leave you.

You will never live one second, or take one step in this world as a child of God without Him!

Notice not only God providence and presence but also:

C. God's Peace (vs. 17b)

Genesis 21:17

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 called her by her name. Notice the contrast between verse 17 and verse 10.

Genesis 21:17

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.

Genesis 21:10

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.

God was concerned about her problem. God spoke peace to her heart.

- God knows
- God cares
- God can speak peace to your heart

Notice not only God providence, presence, peace but also:

D. God's Promise (vs. 18)

Genesis 21:18

¹⁸ Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation.

Notice not only God providence, presence, peace, and promise but also:

E. God's Provision (vs. 19)

Genesis 21:19

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.

Note:

God opened her eyes and showed her what she had needed all along right in front of her!

There are two words in the Old Testament referring to "well". One word speaks of an "artesian well, or a spring of water." This kind of "well" occurs naturally

The word used here refers to a "dug well." Think about that!

At some point in the past, God had moved on the heart of some traveler to dig a "well" right here.

God did that because He knew that Hagar and Ishmael would be in that spot on that very day, and that they would need the water that "well" had to offer them.

We have a God Who works on both ends of time to accomplish His purposes.

God is already in your tomorrow. He is already in your “there,” and when you get “there,” you will find Him, and what He has already left there for your provisions.

He is the God Who is “able.”

Ephesians 3:20

²⁰ Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Our problems blind us to His provisions. He can open our eyes and show us that He has everything we could ever need.

Close:

What aileth thee? Whatever it is, listen again to the words of the Savior:

Matthew 11:28

²⁸ Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Look at verse 19 for a moment. God gave Hagar a “well” and she is still trying to live off the “bottle.”

That's just what we do, isn't it? God has given us unlimited spiritual resources in Himself, and we settle for so much less.

God has everything we need.

It's time to throw away the bottle and enjoy the well that the Lord has prepared for us.