

Covenant and Grace  
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I did not know before that God had ever needed a friend. I did not know, I could not have believed, that any mortal man could possibly have befriended Almighty God. I need a friend. I need companionship. I need advice and counsel and correction. I need to be cheered and comforted. I often feel lonely. I often despond. I often miss my way of life. I often commit myself to rash, ill considered, and irretrievable steps. I often hurt both myself and other men with me. And, therefore, I need near me a faithful friend. A friend to speak to me in time, and with wisdom, and with both sympathy and encouragement. A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. And there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. Faithful are the wounds of such a friend. Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart: so does the sweetness of a man's counsel. Iron sharpens iron: so does a man sharpen the countenance of his friend. A true friend to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and what so ever lies upon the heart. The great office of a friend is to try our thoughts by the measure of his judgments; to task the wholesomeness of our designs and purposes by the feelings of his heart; to protect us from the solitary and selfish part of our nature; to speak to and to call out those finer and better parts of our nature which the customs of this world stifle; and to open up to us a career worthy of our powers. Now, of no mortal man but Abraham alone does Almighty God ever speak and say, he was My friend. Abraham believed God; and he was called the friend of God (James 2: 23 ASV).

Abraham had two sons, one by the hand maid, and one by the free woman. Howbeit the son by the hand maid is born after the flesh; but the son by the free woman is born through promise. Which things contain an allegory: for these women are two covenants; one from mount Sinai, bearing children unto bondage, which is Hagar. Now this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia and answers to the Jerusalem that now is: for she is in bondage with her children. But the Jerusalem that

is above is free, which is our mother. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bear not; Break forth and cry, thou that travail not: For more are the children of the desolate than of her that has the husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, so also it is now. What says the scripture? Cast out the hand maid and her son: for the son of the hand maid shall not inherit with the son of the free woman. Wherefore, brethren, we are not children of a hand maid, but of the free woman (Galatians 4: 22-31).

Hagar had not come from Ur of the Chaldees with the immigration, neither had she been bought by Abraham in Canaan. Hagar was an Egyptian child. When Sarah was down in Egypt with her husband Abraham, young Hagar had been recommended to Sarah for a lady's maid. Sarah made trial of the girl in the place, and had been glad to find that she had all the talent and all the character she had been certified to have. Though it looked a wild proposal that Hagar should leave her mother's house, and all the religion and civilization of Egypt, to go to the savage land of the Philistines, poor people like Hagar's parents could not oppose. Sarah was the rich sister of Abraham, a favorite in Pharaoh's palace. Hagar's expatriation and banishment so far from home made her all the better maid to Sarah. Hagar had no choice. She must please her mistress. She had no opportunity to do anything else. She was so far from home that Sarah became both mistress and mother to the poor Egyptian girl. All went well, till Sarah's sin began to find her out.

Sarah was barren, she had no child. Time went on, and as the hope of any possibility of her ever becoming a mother, died out of Abraham's married wife's heart, she became absolutely desperate. It was intolerable to Sarah to live any longer, such an embarrassment to her husband, such an obstacle to the prosperity of his house, and such an eyesore to all the camp and country around. In the wildness of her pride Sarah determined to make it impossible for Abraham in his heart

any longer to despise her. What looked like a perfect miracle of humility in Sarah, was really an act of exasperated pride. Sarah sacrificed herself on the cruelist altar on which any woman ever laid herself down; but the cords of the sacrifice were all the time the cords of a suicidal pride; till the sacrifice was both a great sin in the sight of God, a fatal injury to herself, to her husband, and to innocent generations yet unborn. What looks to all men's eyes like a martyr's devotion may all the time be but impatience, petulance, pride, and revenge. The outward act may sound heroic, while all the time cowardice and selfishness and exasperated pride may be at the bottom of it. To sacrifice yourself, therefore, is not enough. Your mind, your motive, your spirit, and your temper in making the sacrifice, that is everything. Sarah sacrificed herself to the last drop of woman's blood; but all the time her heart was as high as heaven, as hot as hell, both against God and against her husband also. Now the Lord has restrained me; but there is my maid! Sarah had run into temptation too terrible for her to bear. My wrong be upon thee she assailed her husband, for I am despised in the eyes of my own maid. Your life all your days may be made bitter to you because of your past.

The apostle says this is allegory in his epistle to the Galatians; when anything is said and another thing more excellent is signified. His first readers must have understood the mystical argument and must have got the good they needed in their day out of his spiritual exposition. For out of this verse spring eleven chapters of Genesis; Chaldea and Canaan, and Egypt; Hagar and Ishmael; the promise of Isaac, and the birth, circumcision, the sacrifice and deliverance of Issac; all the trials and all the triumphs of his father's and his mother's faith; all their falls; all their victories; all God's promises; and His wonderful fulfillment of a so long delayed promise. Abraham is my faith in God's promise to me of the fruit of the Spirit in me. I have some faith, but I have no love. I have not enough faith to make my love fruitful. My heart is as much without a seed as was Sarah's. God help my unbelief.

Text: Galatians 5: 1 ASV

For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.

But I say that so long as the heir is a child, he differeth nothing from a bondservant though he is lord of all; but is under guardians and stewards until the day appointed of the father. So we also, when we were children, were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world: but when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So that thou art no longer a bondservant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God (Galatians 4: 1-7 ASV).

He made your sin bitter to you. He made your life a wilderness around you. He came near at the well of Shur to you. Why did I submit myself to that mistress? She awakened and found the angel at the well. And she drank of the well. Beer-lahai-roi, Thou God seest me! That well springs up on the road between Kadesh and Bered. Hagar, by reason of the extremity of her sorrow; by reason of her utter desolateness and brokenness of her heart; and by the reason of sovereign grace and abounding mercy of God discovers the nearness of God. The pure in heart shall see God. Wonderful is His name.

I am a member of the kingdom of God Almighty by covenant.

Text: Genesis 17: 1-9 ASV portioned

Abram was ninety-nine years old.

Jehovah appeared.

I am God Almighty.

Abram fell on his face.

God talked with Abram.

Saying, walk before Me, and be perfect.

I establish My covenant, an everlasting covenant with you.  
Keep My covenant.  
You and your seed after you throughout their generations.  
Your name shall be Abraham.  
I will make you exceeding fruitful.  
You shall father a multitude of nations.  
Kings shall come out of you.  
I give to you, and your seed, all the land of Canaan, an everlasting possession.  
I will be their God.

Text: Deuteronomy 21: 22-23 ASV portioned

If a man committed a sin worthy of death,  
and he be put to death,  
and you hang him on a tree;  
He is accursed of God.  
His body shall not remain all night upon the tree.  
Bury him the same day.  
That you defile not the land Jehovah gave you for inheritance.

Having heard the word of the truth, gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise; which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession. Praise His glory (Ephesians 1: 13-14 ASV portioned). The land Jehovah gave you, possess it.

Text: Galatians 3: 13-14 ASV portioned

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.  
Having become a curse for us;  
It is written, cursed is every one that hangs on a tree.  
The blessing of Abraham comes upon gentiles, in Christ Jesus.  
We receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.  
There are willful trespasses to your account.  
Which must be audited.

The curse of war is upon us.  
The curse of grief is upon us.  
The curse of death is upon us.  
Christ was hanged.  
There was no sin found to His charge.  
In 2,000 years no one ever found a sin to His charge.  
Think about it.  
You and I are redeemed from the curse.  
You and I are not under it.  
You and I are in the midst of it.  
But you and I are not under it.  
There are no other alternatives.  
God, the Father, accepted what Jesus Christ did.

Text: Isaiah 53: 4-6 ASV portioned  
I like sheep have gone astray.  
I have turned to my own way.  
Jehovah has laid on Jesus my iniquity.  
Jesus has borne my griefs,  
Jesus has carried my sorrows;  
Jesus was wounded for my transgressions,  
Jesus was bruised for my iniquities;  
The chastisement of my peace was upon Jesus;  
With Jesus stripes I am healed.

By grace I have been saved through faith; and that is the gift of God  
(Ephesians 2: 8 ASV).

The church, in which Jew and Gentile are made one, is creation of the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit, decreed of eternity, and destined for eternity. The church was foreordained of God, that it has been redeemed, and that Jew and Gentile have been made one in Christ. I declare that I am joint heir with Jesus and a member of the kingdom of God by covenant and grace. Aren't you?