

# War Begins When Born Again

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[ 0 : 00 ] A little to the chapter we read in Galatians, Galatians chapter 4, reading at verse 28.

Now you brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. But just as that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. But what does the scripture say? Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.

So brothers, we are not children of the slave, but of the free woman. Now nobody in their right mind likes war of any kind.

And history has shown probably the ugliest war of all is probably a civil war. It is probably the most heartbreaking, the most painful, and often possibly the most violent of all.

[ 1 : 11 ] And in a sense, when a person becomes a Christian, civil war breaks out within our lives. And of course that is a very challenging and a difficult thing.

And that in many ways is what the Apostle Paul is writing about to the church here in Galatia. And as you and I know ourselves, the challenge of being a Christian is so often found in the inward struggles that go on within our own lives.

Where there is the sense of the flesh at war with the spirit. The old at war with the new. There is just this ongoing struggle between what is right and what is wrong.

And where the spirit of God is at war with what we would term the flesh. And it is something that brings a Christian down.

If you are tonight a Christian in here, or wherever you are, you know what that is like. I can't believe that there is any person who would claim to be a Christian who doesn't know anything of the inward conflict and the struggle that goes on.

[ 2 : 33 ] A struggle that will often leave a person wondering, am I a Christian at all? The way I think, the way of what is going on, and just this constant battle, this constant struggle that goes on day after day and night after night.

But that is what the Apostle Paul is dealing with in this chapter. And he is teaching great truths through the history of Abraham and Abraham's household.

Now, you will remember how Sarah and Abraham, how God had given great promises way, way back that he was going to bless them through the family.

And that he had given the promise to Abraham that he was going to be the father of a great nation. And that through him, all the nations of this world were going to be blessed.

It was an incredible promise. And that his seed would be as many as the stars of the sky, and like the sand on the seashore. That you couldn't count. You try and count the stars at night, or try and count the sand on the seashore.

[ 3 : 44 ] And you can't. God is saying to Abraham, that's, you're going to be the father of a nation like this. And Abraham believed God, was counted to him for righteousness.

But then, as we know, what happened was, years and years and years went by. And Abraham and Sarah had no children. And you and I know that that is often the way that God works within our lives.

That we have his promise. And very often, when we are given the faith to lay hold upon God's promise, these promises will be tested.

We often say that. But it's true. And that is part of how faith grows. Our faith strengthens. Our faith develops.

When we rely upon God's promise, irrespective of what's happening around. Even when everything around seems to be going in the opposite direction. And yet, laying hold, continuing to lay hold upon what God says.

[ 4 : 50 ] And we've also got to remember that what God says is true. God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath he not said, and shall he not do, is what the word of God reminds us.

But you remember how in the history of Abraham that there was a, what we might term a lapse of faith. There was a famine in the land. And Abraham, he took a wrong turning. And he went down to Egypt. He should have trusted God and stayed where he was. And believing that God would continue to supply because God had showed him where to go. But Abraham, he took this detour to Egypt. And it was in Egypt that he procured Hagar, who became a servant woman or a slave. And was in the household working for Sarah. So, as we say, the years went on. We remember the story very well.

[ 5 : 53 ] And ten years or so after they were living in the land of Canaan, and there was still no sign of a child. And Sarah was getting older and older.

And she knew that the likelihood of being able to have a child were getting less and less and less. And it had reached a stage where she believed it was now impossible. And she said to Abraham to take Hagar like as a second wife. And to have a child with her. And that that child would become the child of promise. That Sarah would look on this as her child. And what they were trying to do was to help God. And you know the one thing that we can't do. When you go through the Bible, you will find the number of times that people have tried to help God. And all they have done is that they get in the way of God.

[ 6 : 53 ] And it's so important that we wait when God... God is a timetable for everything. And when God has promised something, God will do it. And he'll do it in his way and in his time.

But Abraham and Sarah had the patience to wait. And particularly when the providence seemed to be going against. So that's what happened.

And of course, we know what happened was that Ishmael was born to Hagar. And Ishmael, that's what we're told in Scripture, was born after the flesh.

He came from what we might say worldly planning. It was from carnal desire. It was at variance with God's promise. And shortly after this, God came to Abraham and said, Ishmael is not the son of promise.

Sarah herself will bear a son. And of course, the name was given that it was to be Isaac. Now, there are many, many things that we could take from this.

[ 8 : 01 ] But I want us tonight just very simply to look in on this where it says, Now you brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. Because when Isaac was born eventually, and he was born, we've got to remember that Sarah was 90, Abraham was 100, that it was an impossibility from a human point of view that Sarah would be able to conceive and bear a child.

And yet, it was by the natural way that this happened. And yet, it was miraculous. It was God who enabled this to happen.

And so there are so many spiritual lessons. And we are told that we too are like Isaac, that we are the children of promise. And what we've got to remember is that this is what the Bible says.

Just as Isaac was a child of Abraham, so are all believers. You tonight, I'm tonight. By being men, women, boys and girls of faith, are children of Abraham.

This is what the Bible says. Don't you know, therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. You see that God made this spiritual promise to Abraham.

[ 9 : 21 ] And so all those who come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are, in a sense, the seed of Abraham.

It was even through the seed of Abraham that the Lord Jesus Christ came. Because remember how he was told that it was through him that all the nations of the world would be blessed.

And of course, that was fulfilled in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. So Abraham is termed in the Bible the father of the faithful. And all those who come to faith in Jesus Christ can look on Abraham in this sense, in a spiritual sense, as a father.

But Isaac was somebody who was really prayed over and prayed about. And it doesn't list all the times that Abraham would have prayed to the Lord.

But there's no doubt whatever, that over the years, Abraham would have prayed and prayed and prayed about the situation. And you know, the wonderful thing is that if you tonight, if you're a

believer, you're somebody that is also prayed over and prayed about.

[10:36] And first of all, you are prayed over by the Lord Jesus Christ. That he makes continual intercession for us.

Isn't that an amazing thought? That tonight Jesus is interceding on your behalf. He does it all the time. So that it's something sometimes we forget about.

But we are at the heart of the prayers of Jesus. When you go to the, Mr. McKeever's been doing the high priestly prayer in John 17 recently. And that's one of the wonderful things is that Jesus wasn't just praying for the disciples who were there at the time.

But for all who would come to be one with him. And Jesus is longing for the day when every single one will be with him in glory.

Father, I will that they also whom you have given me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory. This is at the very heart of the desires of Jesus.

[11:42] And so it's a wonderful thing to know that this is part and partial of what is going on within our lives. But you know, one of the other wonderful things is that if you tonight are a Christian, there is every likelihood.

Not only that you're being prayed for by others in this world. But that before ever you became a Christian, you were being prayed for as well. It's amazing how often God puts a burden on people's hearts to pray for someone.

Maybe you're like that tonight and you can say, you know, there's somebody and over the years I can't stop praying about him or her. They're there, they come in my prayers.

And I just feel that I have to pray for them. I can't, it won't, this passion won't go away. Or maybe there's more than one. And it might be many years, you might never see it, but it might be many years later that person comes to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God gives us people to pray for. But it's not only those that are being prayed for coming to faith, but he also gives us his own people to pray for.

[13:02] And I'm sure very often when you're praying that different people, different people within this congregation, different people elsewhere, they come to your mind and you pray for them.

God does this in our heart. It's one of the wonderful things. And you know, it's one of the greatest things in this world to be prayed for. And you know, sometimes people will say when they've been ill, and they say, you know, it's amazing.

I was so conscious, they'll say, of being upheld in prayer that I was almost in a bubble of prayer.

And they will then say, you know, I can almost feel when, you know, when they were getting better that people weren't praying in the same way, the same sense.

So it's a wonderful thing to be at the heart of people's prayers. But we've got to remember that just as Isaac was at the heart of his father's prayers, so we are at the heart of the son's prayer and also in the heart of many other people.

But as Isaac was a child of promise and was born in a very miraculous way, even although he was born naturally, so it is with us also.

[14:14] That's true spiritually as well. Because when we come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we're not aware exactly of what is happening.

We're not analyzing and saying to ourselves, do you know what's happening right now? I believe that God's spirit is working in a way in my heart and opening my heart in order that I may receive Jesus Christ.

We're not thinking like that at that particular time. But what we're doing is that we're praying. We're asking the Lord, Lord, have mercy upon me. Lord, help me to come into my heart.

Give me the gift of salvation. Help me to reach into my heart, Lord. Touch me. So we're asking the Lord to save us. But what the Lord is actually doing is he is working in us.

We are being born from above. We're being born again. And it's miraculous. Because what is dead, all of a sudden, life comes.

[15:24] Where there's darkness, there's light. When there's despair, there's hope. Everything has changed. It's miraculous. It's miraculous. We've been turned right round in a new direction, going in a new way.

And that is all of God's doing and God's dealing. And yet, at the same time, here we are and we're doing our part.

This is where the man's responsibility comes in. There's God's sovereignty and man's responsibility and beautifully come together. But we're calling to him. And may I say tonight, if there's anybody here who's never come to that place of assurance that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior, please tonight, even now, ask him and say, Lord, make me a willing recipient of your grace. Help me to see that salvation is a gift and that you're the giver. Open my heart in order to receive. And you know, if you really pray this, if this is your genuine desire, then God will do this. He will, he will, because he's through to his word. Because you'll never seek the Lord in vain. The Lord doesn't create desires in your heart and then just say, no, I'm not, actually, I'm not going to save you after all.

[ 16 : 44 ] So, this is just as Isaac, as a child of promise, was born in a very miraculous way, so it is with us as well.

And when Isaac was born, he brought laughter and joy into the heart and into the life. Yes, of Abraham, but particularly of Sarah.

Sarah said, you know, that she was, she was unable to laugh, that there was now laughter in her life. And you know, when a person is born again, there is a great sense of joy.

There's joy in heaven. We're told that. That there's joy in heaven. This is the joy that was in our Savior's heart. Remember how it tells us why he endured the cross.

This was the joy that was set before him, why he endured the cross. In order that he would see his blood-bought ones being brought home.

[ 17 : 45 ] There's a great sense of joy. And I'm sure there is within our own heart. You know, that's one of the things, when you hear of somebody that's been converted, somebody's born again. As a Christian, you don't just go, oh, that's good.

You say, oh, really? Wow, that's great. There is a real sense of joy, of thrill within your heart. There's a response there.

And you say, this is great news. Another passion has come into the family of God. Another passion has been delivered from darkness into light.

And so, there is this great sense of joy. And we can also say that Isaac, when we look at this, I'll just move very quickly here.

It says, now you are brothers like Isaac, our children of promise. We would have to say that when Isaac, that God's promises with regard to Isaac didn't stop the moment that Isaac was born.

[ 18 : 48 ] God didn't say to Abraham and Isaac, that's it now. I have fulfilled my duty. I have fulfilled my promise. I have given to you a little baby.

And then, as it were, that God withdrew out of the scene. No. All Isaac's life, God was Isaac's God. And God provided for Isaac all the time. And, you know, this is what happens with us as well. As children of promise, God remains our God every day of our life.

This is a wonderful thing. And just as Isaac, as a little baby, would have been nourished and fed, so are we. And we're, first of all, in the sincere milk before we grow up and take of the strong meat. And God nourishes us and feeds us on his word so that every day we become stronger. And every day we are more equipped and nourished for all that lies ahead of us.

[ 19 : 55 ] All that we have to do as we journey through this world. And Isaac depended on his parents. And you and I depend on the Lord.

You know, there's never going to come a time in our life when we say, you know this. See, I'm a Christian. I've been a Christian 10, 20, 30, 40, 50 years. You know what? I've outgrown God. I no longer need him.

You will never, ever, ever hear a Christian say that. In fact, it's the very reverse. The older you are as a Christian, the more you end up depending upon him.

The less strength you feel you have in yourself. The weaker you are aware of your walk in this world. The more you're looking to the Lord and saying, Lord, I really can do nothing on my own. I am utterly dependent upon you. That's the way it is. That's the way that grace works within our lives. But as we come to conclude it, you notice here that it wasn't plain sailing in the house when Isaac and Ishmael were together.

[ 21 : 07 ] Because Ishmael began to persecute little Isaac. And in the end, you remember what happened that Isaac and Ishmael and Hagar had to leave.

And there was a real spiritual picture there. Because that still goes on.

That those who are not Christians will continue to persecute the Christian. It happens right throughout to this very day.

But you know, very often the worst persecution that the Christian gets is from what we might say religious bodies.

And it was the same in Jesus' time. Jesus faced endless opposition. Where did it come from? It came from those who didn't really know the truth.

[ 22 : 07 ] It came from religious zealots. It came from people who thought they were so right before God. But they were people whose rightness was self-righteousness.

It wasn't anything to do with grace. It was only self-righteousness. And that they give Jesus no end of problem. You look at Paul's life.

And the early church. So much of the persecution came from the Jews. And you know, when you look at church history. A lot of the persecution that takes place within the sphere of the church. It comes from religious bodies. Rather than from outside the world. Although there is also that as well. The all-important question that we have to ask ourselves tonight.

That there's an awful lot of things that we could look at there. Are you tonight living as a child of promise? Have you experienced that amazing birth within your own life?

[ 23 : 12 ] A new birth. A change. Where you found that you can look back on your life. And you say, you know, some people when they come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's very clear to them. But for many people it's not. And there isn't this kind of dividing mark that some do have. Some don't. And they sometimes struggle to make out.

Am I a Christian or not? But you know, the thing is, if your desire, if your desire is that you want to have Christ.

And your desire is that you want to walk according to God's way. And that you have a desire to the things of God. Nobody but a Christian can have that.

If these are your real desires. These are God-given. They don't come from the world. They don't even come from yourself. Oh, you can have lots of self-righteous things going on from self.

[ 24 : 16 ] But not real longing and desire for Christ and to be like Christ. And the things of Christ. And His word. If His word is becoming ever more special and precious to you.

That is so encouraging. I pray tonight that every single one of us here will be a child of promise. And indeed all who are involved with our service online.

Let us pray. Lord, we give thanks for our time together. And pray that you will bless this word to us. We give thanks that you are able to take the good seed.

And even when the cold winds of this world and the hardness of our heart may resist it. Your power is able to break all resistances.

And so we pray that the good seed may indeed go down deep into every heart and into every life.

Watch over us, we pray, and do us good. Cleanse us from our sin.

[ 25 : 15 ] Take us home safely. In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen. Our final singing is from Psalm 71. And this is from Sing Psalms.

We did have, I think we had Psalm 71 this morning. So we do have it again this evening. Psalm 71 from Sing Psalms. In you, O Lord, I take refuge.

Protect me ever from disgrace. Rescue and save me in your justice. Turn to me as I seek your face. Be my strong rock and my sure refuge.

To which I always may resort. Give the command to help and save me. Because you are my rock and fort. And so on to verse 8. Psalm 71.

In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge. Amen. In you, O Lord, I have taken refuge.

[ 26 : 23 ] Protect me ever from disgrace. Rescue and save me in your justice.

Turn to me as I seek your face. Be my strong rock and my sure refuge.

Be my strong rock and my sure refuge. To which I always may resort.

Give the command to help and save me. He lost you, O Lord, I have taken refuge. He lost you, O Lord. He lost you, O Lord.

He lost you, O Lord. I have taken refuge. Be my strong rock and fort. From wicked hands, my God, O save me.

[ 27 : 26 ] From cruel hands, no violence. For sovereign Lord, you be my refuge, and since my youth, my confidence.

From birth I have relied upon you, you are the guide of all my grace.

Out of my mother's womb you brought me, to you I ever will give praise.

Too many I am cause of wonder, but you are still my refuge strong.

My mouth is filled with adoration, praising your splendor all day long.

[ 28 : 56 ] Remember to adhere to the social distancing on your way out, and wait for the men on door duty to show you the way the two doors here will be open for exits, and also to use the hand sanitizer as you leave.

We'll stand for the benediction. Now may the grace, mercy, and peace of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore. Amen.