

GENESIS 21:8-21 ANOTHER SON WITH A PROMISE

⁸ The child grew and was weaned, and on the day Isaac was weaned Abraham held a great feast. ⁹ But Sarah saw that the son whom Hagar the Egyptian had borne to Abraham was mocking, ¹⁰ and she said to Abraham, "Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac."

¹¹ The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son. ¹² But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned. ¹³ I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring." ¹⁴ Early the next morning Abraham took some food and a skin of water and gave them to Hagar. He set them on her shoulders and then sent her off with the boy. She went on her way and wandered in the desert of Beersheba.

¹⁵ When the water in the skin was gone, she put the boy under one of the bushes. ¹⁶ Then she went off and sat down nearby, about a bowshot away, for she thought, "I cannot watch the boy die." And as she sat there nearby, she began to sob. ¹⁷ God heard the boy crying, and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter, Hagar? Do not be afraid; God has heard the boy crying as he lies there. ¹⁸ Lift the boy up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a great nation." ¹⁹ Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. So she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. ²⁰ God was with the boy as he grew up. He lived in the desert and became an archer. ²¹ While he was living in the Desert of Paran, his mother got a wife for him from Egypt.

Through out the Bible we see evidence of what has come to be known as the "Law of Unintended Consequences." In their impatience, Abram and Sarai take matters into their own hands and Abram sires a son by the Egyptian maid, Hagar. They do this with the intention that this off-spring would be the son of the promise. They are in disobedience to God's perfect will, and therefore, wrong. But Ishmael is still Abram's son and part of God's promise. The angel of God spoke to Hagar and promised that her descendents would be *too numerous to count* (16:10). When God renamed Abram, he said that he would be the father of *many* nations (17:5-6). Then in verse 13, God says: "*I will make the son of the maidservant into a nation also, because he is your offspring.*" God's promises are not annulled by our disobedience. Neither will the consequences of our disobedience be removed.

When we introduce disorder into God's perfect order, we will suffer disruption and enmity. While Ishmael is covered by the promise to his father (to become a nation), the angel also informs Hagar that:

¹² He will be a wild donkey of a man; his hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers"
(Genesis 16:12)

This enmity has existed throughout the history of Israel, and is a stark reality even today. Let it be to us a warning to let God be God according to God's way. Be patient; when God wants our help he'll tell us.

Lord, help me to remain in your perfect will and restrain me from the urge to get out ahead of you. Amen.