

Galatians 4:13–31 (NA27)

¹³ οἴδατε δὲ ὅτι δι' ἀσθένειαν τῆς σαρκὸς εὐηγγελισάμην ὑμῖν τὸ πρότερον,

Two possible meanings here:

- Some malady that came upon Paul forcing a change of course that led him into South Galatia (unmentioned in Acts 13)
- Referring to the Damascus road blinding, and the healing by Ananias only a partial restoration

The irony is that through this “weakness of flesh” that the Messiah’s new creation is carried forward. The solution to the weakness of flesh is not fleshly strength but the Messiah’s strength, which is perfected in weakness (1 Cor 12:9).

¹⁴ καὶ τὸν πειρασμὸν ὑμῶν ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου
οὐκ ἐξουθενήσατε οὐδὲ ἐξεπτύσατε,
ἀλλὰ ὡς ἄγγελον θεοῦ
ἐδέξασθέ με,
ὡς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν.

Paul, though not carry the prerequisite impressiveness of appearance and speech, was received as a messenger from God, even as the Messiah himself (appropriate cf. Matt. 10:40)

¹⁵ ποῦ οὖν ὁ μακαρισμὸς ὑμῶν;
μαρτυρῶ γὰρ ὑμῖν
ὅτι εἰ δυνατὸν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ὑμῶν ἐξορύξαντες
ἐδώκατέ μοι.

He reminds them of their personal commitment to him, willing even to share in his disgrace had it been necessary.

¹⁶ ὥστε ἐχθρὸς ὑμῶν γέγονα ἀληθεύων ὑμῖν;

¹⁷ ζηλοῦσιν ὑμᾶς οὐ καλῶς,
ἀλλὰ ἐκκλεῖσαι ὑμᾶς θέλουσιν,
ἵνα αὐτοὺς ζηλοῦτε·

Paul switches to speak as a mother warning a child against a zealous suitor. The false teachers are excluding the Galatians:

- From the people God, until they’re circumcised
- From Paul

Paul’s perspective is that they are excluding the Galatians from the people of God by their circumcision.

¹⁸ καλὸν δὲ ζηλοῦσθαι ἐν καλῷ πάντοτε
καὶ μὴ μόνον ἐν τῷ παρεῖναί με πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

It is ok to be won over by the right kind of zeal and to the right ends, but be careful.

¹⁹ τέκνα μου, οὐς πάλιν ὠδίνω μέχρις οὗ μορφωθῆ Χριστὸς ἐν ὑμῖν·

The false teachers have attempted to reverse the birthing process, and Paul finds himself in the pains of labor again. This letter itself is the expression of Paul's labor pains. They are trying to push the Galatians back into the old Creation and Paul is trying to rebirth them into the new Creation. His goal: That Christ may be formed in you.

²⁰ ἤθελον δὲ παρεῖναι πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἄρτι
καὶ ἀλλάξαι τὴν φωνήν μου,
ὅτι ἀποροῦμαι ἐν ὑμῖν.

Not wanting to deal with a wayward child from a distance, he wishes to be close to them and receive assurances from them that they are going to take the right path.

²¹ Λέγετέ μοι,
οἱ ὑπὸ νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι,
τὸν νόμον οὐκ ἀκούετε;

Paul plays on the word 'Torah' here:

- Those of you wishing to be under the 'Torah' (Mosaic Covenant)
- Do you not listen to the 'Torah' (Five Books of Moses)

"In this case, those desiring to be subject to the Torah Covenant need to consider the significance of the Genesis narrative of Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Isaac, and Ishmael. Torah provides a lesson they must heed; and in the context of Paul's argument, the ironic lesson is that the Galatians must repudiate Torah and expel those who are sold to its service." (Gallant)

²² γέγραπται γὰρ ὅτι
Ἄβραάμ δύο υἱοὺς ἔσχεν,
ἓνα ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης
καὶ ἓνα ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρης.

A tale of two sons (note the use of two 'ones' here, cf. Ch.3 and the 'one'):

- Ishmael – one from the slave woman
- Isaac – one from the free woman

²³ ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης κατὰ σάρκα γεγέννηται,
ὁ δὲ ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρης δι' ἐπαγγελίας.

One birth was "according to the flesh" – alluding to slavery

One birth was “through the promise” – this was only true of Isaac, whose birth “was intended to carry forward the seed, required [Spirit] intervention, birth by the power of the Spirit, effected within Sarah’s lifeless womb. That pointed forward to the eschatological birth of the heirs of the new creation.”

The Spirit is the giver of life, Torah does not bring the Spirit but works death and wrath rather than life.

²⁴ ἄτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα·
αὗται γάρ εἰσιν δύο διαθηκῆαι,
μία μὲν ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ εἰς δουλείαν γεννῶσα,
ἣτις ἐστὶν Ἀγάρ.

²⁵ τὸ δὲ Ἀγάρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ·
συστοιχεῖ δὲ τῇ νῦν Ἱερουσαλήμ,
δουλεῦει γὰρ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς.

Carefully note, however, that Paul specifies only the Hagar-side of the parallel construction and, without so much as referring to Sarah by name, leaves the Sarah-side of the construction unspecified. The significance of the unfinished character of the parallel is often overlooked as interpreters have not hesitated to fill in the Sarah-side of the construction using the force of logical parity. (Jobes)

²⁶ ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἱερουσαλήμ ἐλευθέρα ἐστὶν,
ἣτις ἐστὶν μήτηρ ἡμῶν·

²⁷ γέγραπται γάρ·
εὐφράνθητι,
στεῖρα ἢ οὐ τίκτουςα,
ῥῆξον καὶ βόησον,

ἢ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα· ὅτι πολλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα.

²⁸ Ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἐστέ.

²⁹ ἀλλ’ ὡσπερ τότε ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθεὶς ἐδίωκεν τὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα,
οὕτως καὶ νῦν. ³⁰ ἀλλὰ τί λέγει ἡ γραφή; ἔκβαλε τὴν παιδίσκην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν
αὐτῆς· οὐ γὰρ μὴ κληρονομήσει ὁ υἱὸς τῆς παιδίσκης μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς
ἐλευθέρας. ³¹ διό, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐσμὲν παιδίσκης τέκνα ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐλευθέρας.

In Isaiah 51, Sarah is presented as the mother of those “who pursue righteousness and seek the Lord.”

51 “Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness,
you who seek the Lord:
look to the rock from which you were hewn,
and to the quarry from which you were dug.
² Look to Abraham your father
and to Sarah who bore you;
for he was but one when I called him,
that I might bless him and multiply him.

³ For the Lord comforts Zion;
he comforts all her waste places
and makes her wilderness like Eden,
her desert like the garden of the Lord;
joy and gladness will be found in her,
thanksgiving and the voice of song.

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (Is 51:1–3). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

In Isaiah's day, city was spoken of in terms of a woman and its inhabitants her children. A conquered city, Jerusalem in this case, would be barren.

When Paul refers to *Jerusalem* (4:25) and *Jerusalem* (4:26), he is echoing Isaiah's portrayal of two Jerusalems. In Galatians the two Jerusalems metonymically represent the two sides of Paul's antithesis between the spiritual states of being *uncircumcised* and *circumcised* (cf. Gal 3:2, 5, 12, 23-25). (Jobe)

Isaiah 26:17-19 connects the themes of resurrection, child birth, barrenness and rejoicing

In transforming narrative history to prophetic proclamation, Isaiah introduces the Holy Spirit as defining the future seed of the faithful mother-city Jerusalem:²⁷ "But now hear, Jacob, my servant; and Israel, whom I have chosen. Thus saith the Lord God that made thee, and he that formed thee from the womb; Thou shalt yet be helped; fear not, my servant Jacob; and beloved Israel, whom I have chosen. For I will give water to the thirsty that walk in a dry land: I will put my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy children" (Isa 44:1-3, emphasis mine). In distinction, the seed of barren, rejected Jerusalem are banished to exile as those who have "framed counsel, not by me, and covenants not by my Spirit, to add sins to sins" (Isa 30:1, emphasis mine). Isaiah speaks of a seed of Abraham who are apart from God's Spirit and who suffer judgment. Just as Isaiah speaks of two Jerusalems, he speaks of two seeds, one who inherit covenant blessings, the other covenant curses. (Jobe) Sarah and the barren one of Isa 54:1 should not be simply identified as one and the same because they meet only in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is, Sarah's identity as the barren woman to whom God promises a miraculous birth merges with that of the barren one of Isa 54:1 at only one point in history—when Jesus, the seed of Abraham (and hence the son of Sarah) arose from the grave to be the firstborn son of New Jerusalem. In Gal 3:16 Paul announces that Jesus is the son ("seed") promised to Abraham, and therefore Jesus is Sarah's son. I believe Paul is arguing that the nation which God promised to bring from Sarah's dead womb and the population of the new Jerusalem prophesied by Isaiah are those people who are born through the resurrection of Jesus, not those who are circumcised. Just as the birth of Isaac eventually issued in the population of earthly Jerusalem by his descendants, the resurrection of Jesus issues in the populating of the new Jerusalem. The faithful mother-city of Zion was desolate because of sin and had no inhabitants until the sinless Jesus rose from the dead. (Do I hear an echo of Gen 3:24?) When Paul cites Isa 54:1, he is metaleptically announcing to the Galatians that when Jesus arose from death, all of the elect seed of Abraham were also born. In this way Paul not only establishes Christians as rightful heirs of the Abrahamic covenant as it was fulfilled in Christ, but at the same time disinherits those who reject Christ's resurrection, though they may be circumcised.