


Ishmael


 Gen 21:1-20

This is the sad story of Ishmael. This young man had a very difficult life. God had promised Abraham a son who would be given to him by his wife Sarah. Unfortunately Sarah didn't become pregnant. So Sarah encouraged Abraham to conceive a child by Hagar, her Egyptian slave. This worked and Ishmael was born. His name means "God hears". Roughly 13 years later Sarah, as if by miracle, does get pregnant and bears a child, Isaac. The arguments within the family get worse. Now that Sarah has a child herself she no longer wants Ishmael to be an heir of Abraham. Eventually Abraham decides to send Hagar and Ishmael away. On this day something terrible happens. Ishmael was Abraham's son, a wealthy and well-known man, and yet Abraham decides to send his son out in to the desert. Now he is the son of a slave-girl. His inheritance is taken from him by this. Ishmael could no longer count on Abraham and the well known person he was. He was no longer Ishmael, son of..... Now he was the son of a slave-girl, known by what he did instead of who he was. A son with no home, no inheritance.

Slave sons and daughters

The story is very similar to our story. Sin also plays a role in our life. This brings division between us and God.


What does the writer say here about us?

 Eph 2:1-3

Sin consumes us. This means that we are not free but are just like slaves. We do the things towards which we are driven. Something has us in its power. A slave gets no inheritance, neither do we who are enslaved by sin. That is why we read that we are dead to God.

Made alive

We are made alive in Christ, how can that be? And how can that not be?

 Eph 2:4-9

Zoë is a Greek word which means life. That life of God's enters us when Jesus comes. Zoë does not come through knowledge but by revelation.

You can compare it to the seed of an apple tree. When you sow this in the ground, you know what you are going to get: an apple tree and not a banana tree. That is also how it is with the life of God that enters in: it forms the life of God in us so that we become like Him.

What remains in us?



1 John 3:9

Who do we become like?



Rom 8:29

Do you remember learning about Mary who got pregnant by the spoken word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit? That was a miracle. Something of God entered her. So the son of God was conceived in her womb. That same life (zoë) enters us. Through this life we start becoming like God.



Rom 8:1-6

In this text we see what happens when we receive the Spirit of life. We are no longer under the law which condemns us, but we are under grace. We are no longer consumed by what we want, but we allow ourselves to be led by the Spirit. It is the same as the story of the two cars in the previous lesson. You cannot use a mix of two types of fuel. There is another advantage if we live by the Spirit of God. It is just like a navigation system. The end destination has already been programmed in by God. We start becoming like Jesus and receive eternal life and remain with God forever. As we start to drive, the Sat Navigation gives the right directions; if we choose a wrong route we receive automatic notification that we need to take a different route or even turn back. The moment in which the Holy Spirit speaks remains a moment in which we have to choose. Do we listen to His voice or not? The difference with living by the law is that we have the steering wheel in our own hands and try and do everything in our own strength. If things go wrong frustration, restlessness and arguments arise. Think back on the story of Ishmael, he was a slave. That is how we go through life, a slave. If we live by the Spirit then the Spirit will continually lead us, even when it sometimes goes wrong. There is no condemnation but a friendly request to turn back and go the right way. The driving power in living by the law is will-power, but the driving power in living by the Spirit of God is grace.

Sons and daughters of God




Rom 8:14-16


How are we called here?

How do we call God by His Spirit?

Jesus did not only come to earth as a prophet but as God's Son. He came to make God known as Father. This had always been God's plan. He wanted to be known as Father. Mankind did not know this and did not accept it. There had always been fear of God and distance. Just as Adam and Eve did so in the garden, many hid themselves from God, for fear of punishment or out of ignorance. Jesus came to show us that we could become children of God.


 *John 1:12,13*

Here we see that it is God's will that we are born as children.


 *Gal 4:4-7, Eph 1:5*


Ishmael was sent away and became a slave, but we are called home as sons and heirs. We no longer need to be slaves to sin, we can be His heirs.

EXERCISE:

 We have read that we can become children of God. You can make this choice today if you have not yet done so.

Pray the prayer yourself that arises in your heart as you think of God wanting to be your Father. Tell Him that you want to come home and that you want to adopt the faith that through Jesus you can be His child.

 When you lived without Jesus there were maybe things to which you were a slave. Write these things down. Ask the Holy Spirit if you have taken a wrong turn somewhere. Know that God does not condemn you but that He just sets you free from slavery. He is not angry with you, but happy that you want to accept His offer.

 Ask your mentor what their experience is of living as a child of God.