

SUBMIT TO AUTHORITY: Genesis 16:1-9

1 Now Sarai Abram's wife bare him no children: and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar.

2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, the LORD hath restrained me from bearing: I pray thee, go in unto my maid; it may be that I may obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.

3 And Sarai Abram's wife took Hagar her maid the Egyptian, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to her husband Abram to be his wife.

4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes.

5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: the LORD judge between me and thee.

6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her as it pleaseth thee. And when Sarai dealt hardly with her, she fled from her face.

7 And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

9 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

I will focus on verses 4b-9 of Genesis chapter 16 for our discussion in this devotion.

Sarai, Abram's wife was old and barren. She had an Egyptian maid by the name of Hagar, who was young and in her childbearing years. Sarai realized that both she and her husband were old, and it was naturally impossible for them to have children. Her husband Abram was promised that he would be the father of a great nation by the fruits from his loins. The promise did not say that he and Sarai would produce a child or children, and through their union all the nations of the world would be blessed. Genesis 12:1-3 reads; " 1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Sarai thought she should help God to fulfill that promise by giving her maid Hagar to Abram to be his wife in order for her to have the son that was promised to Abram, who heeded his wife's suggestion.

We will see that it does not matter how well intended it may be, when a third person is involved in a marriage union, conflict will develop. Hagar became pregnant. She may have thought that because she was carrying Abram's son, and his wife Sarai was still barren, she was then elevated from the helper to Abram's favorite wife and saw herself better than Sarai. Verse 4b of Genesis chapter 16 says, "and she (Hagar) saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her

eyes.” She no longer honored her mistress, but instead she showed contempt towards her. Sarai; noticed the change in Hagar, from being a submissive maid to be a contemptuous competitor for Abram’s affection.

It is noticeable that Sarai did not take responsibility for being the cause of changes in her household, she said her wrong was upon Abram. She may have been wrong to suggest to him and gave him her maid to be his wife for the purpose of having a child, but he was responsible for her behavior of Hagar towards her. In a sense she was correct, even though she made the suggestion and brought her maid to him, he did not have to agree and submit to what she suggested. If he had rejected her suggestions, they would not face the crisis in their home.

His response to Sarai was, she is under your authority, you deal with her as you see fit. (Genesis 16:6a) Sarai then, started to deal harshly with Hagar, who no longer wanted to submit to Sarai’s authority. As a result, she fled and went into the wilderness towards Egypt. The place from where she came.

Observe, while Hagar was in the house of Abram and Sarai she was protected. When she no longer was obedient and did not want to submit to the authority of her mistress Sarai, she was on her own. Being on her own she was wondering in the wilderness, while on her way to Egypt. In the Bible, Egypt represents sin. When we refuse to submit to authority, we expose ourselves to the will of the enemy.

Sarai had not treated Hagar harshly until she started despising her. It was a downward spiral for Hagar after that moment. When she fled, she was no longer under Abram’s shelter or covering, she was in the wilderness. She was on her way to Egypt. If we refuse to submit to those who have authority over us, we remove ourselves from God’s protection and become tools in the hands of the enemy.

We will find ourselves wondering in the wilderness on our way to our Egypt.

When we find ourselves there in the wilderness, God who is merciful, will send His messenger to us as He did for Hagar.

The angel of the Lord found Hagar by a well in the wilderness and called her by her name, he addressed her as Sarai's maid. She may have thought that because she fled from her mistress, she no longer belonged to her. When individuals refuse to submit to those who have the rule over them, they deceive themselves by thinking that they are on their own. While out in the wilderness on her way to Egypt, the angel called her Sari's maid, she still belongs to Sarai. Sarai had not discharged her or set her away, she ran away.

Paul instructed O-nes-I-mus a runaway slave to return to his master Philemon. O-nes-I-mus ran away from his master and he became a believer in Christ. He was very attentive to Paul while Paul was in Prison. His master Philemon was also a believer in Christ. Paul sent O-nes-I-mus with a letter of recommendation to his master and instructed Philemon, to receive him as a brother. (Philemon 10-18)

We have been bought with a price, we are not on our own, we belong to God. If and when we refuse to submit to the authority of those, He has placed over us, regardless of our reason, He will still reach out to us while we are in our wilderness. The angel asked Hagar, where she was coming from and where she was going. She replied she was running from Sarai her mistress. The angel told her to return to her mistress and submit herself under her hands. (Genesis 16:9)

Hagar had to return and submit to the authority of Sarai. She had to return to the harsh treatment,

yes, it was God's will for her to be subjected to the authority of Sarai. There was purpose in the requirement to return and submit. Hagar was carrying Abram's seed. A seed that had God's blessings. She had to go back so that she could give birth to the seed which she was carrying, and the birth had to take place while she was submissive to authority.

There are times when we are serving leaders who may be treating us harshly, whether we caused it on ourselves or not, we must submit to them and seek God's council. Never just get up and run away without getting God's release to go. Some individuals get upset with their pastor or someone in leadership in the church they attend, and they leave and go to another. That is wrong, God may want to use that pastor or leader to help the individual to develop character, in order to fulfill their purpose and give birth to the ministry He has placed in the individual. The individual may be carrying the seed of a ministry that needs to be birth while he/ she is submitted to the one who has authority over him/her. God does not want us to give birth to our ministry while you are not under authority and are out in the wilderness on your way to our Egypt.

Hagar was told by the angel to return to Sarai and submit herself under her hand.

If you have been running away and are not submitting to those who have the rule over you, I encourage you to return and submit. Going back and submitting will help to build character in you and fulfill your purpose. Hagar went back, submitted to Sarai, and gave birth to Ishmael, Abram's son. Because he was Abram's son, he was blessed even though he was not the son of the promise. His blessings were because of the blessings of Abram and his descendants. Those who refuse to return and submit, find themselves wondering in the wilderness, and end up going back to their Egypt and abandon the seed they were carrying, thereby abort their mission and purpose.

To believers this is what the writer of Hebrews wrote in chapter 13 verse 17; “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.”