

The Persecuted Seed Who Brings Division

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[0 : 0 0] more. But we're going to be reading now in our Bibles, and if you have a Bible, if you turn with me to Genesis chapter 21. If you don't have a Bible, you'll see there's some at the sides of the church there, some at the front. Go and grab one or ask one of the stewards. They'll be glad to give one to you. And we're reading together. We're studying the book of Genesis, and we've been reading recently in these chapters all about the life of Abraham. Last week we looked at the first seven verses of chapter 21, which told of the miraculous birth at last of Isaac, the promised seed, the son promised to Abraham. And after so many years of waiting and wondering, there was extraordinary joy in his birth. But not only joy, and that's what we're going to read about this morning from verse 8. So Genesis 21 then, reading at verse 8. And the child, that's Isaac, grew and was weaned. And Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, whom she had born to Abraham, laughing or better mocking. So she said to Abraham, cast out this slave woman with her son, for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son

Isaac. And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, be not displeased because of the boy and because of your slave woman, whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your offspring be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring. So Abraham rose early in the morning and took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder. And along with the child, sent her away. That verse is badly translated in the ESV. It makes it out as though Abraham put the child on top of Abraham along with the water. But Isaac by this time is probably nearly 16.

And better to read it this way. Abraham rose early in the morning, took bread and a skin of water and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder. And along with the child, sent her away. And she departed, wandered in the wilderness of Beersheba. When the water and the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes.

And then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bow shot. So she said, let me look on the death. Let me not look on the death of the child.

And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad. And the angel called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, what troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Up, lift up the boy, hold him fast with your hand, for I will make him into a great nation. And then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water.

[3 : 3 9] And she went and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink. And God was with the boy and he grew up. He lived in the wilderness. He became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran.

And his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt. Amen. May God bless to us his word.

We'll do turn, if you would, in your Bibles to Genesis chapter 21. And we're looking together at the section from verses 8 to 21, which is all about the persecuted seed who brings division.

It shouldn't surprise us when we read about Abraham's life and God's dealing with him, that we recognize patterns that actually seem very familiar to us. And God's dealing with our own lives because we are Abraham's seed.

We're heirs of the same promise. We're people of the same God, the same great Redeemer. And the patterns of our Redeemer and his redeeming ways touch the lives and experiences of all of his people, both then and now.

[5 : 01] Because to be a believer in Jesus is to be united with our Redeemer and in his pattern. And that is, of course, the pattern of his death and his resurrection.

Remember, Paul said to the Philippian church that it's been granted to those who are Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake and to be engaged in conflict for the faith.

Now, that is the privilege of gospel grace, whether like us living in these last days or indeed like Abraham, living long before Christ's coming and longing for that day.

And that's why the whole Old Testament is not a pre-Christian book, but it's a Christian book. And it has so much to teach believers today. That's why we shouldn't be surprised to see the unchanging patterns of God's redeeming ways on every single page.

And these chapters about the birth of Isaac are very full of such patterns. Verses 1 to 7, we saw last time about the promised seed who brings delight in his birth.

[6 : 12] But in this section today, in verses 8 to 21, we see another very distinctive pattern as we read about the persecuted seed who brings division by his life. I want you to notice the careful structure here.

You have that on a handout. There are two parallel stories. They both have a very, very similar structure with a clear center in each. And the center is on God's decisive word of response that confirms his promise to Abraham, the promise about the future of his sons.

So in verses 8 to 14, there's a threat to Isaac's destiny as Abraham's heir. And God's word gives reassurance about his spiritual future.

And then in verses 15 to 21, that threat is to Ishmael's life. And again, God gives a word of reassurance about his earthly future. And the writer wants us to focus there on God's word of response to each of these situations as tension arises due to the birth of this long promised seed.

So I want to look to the chapter under three headings. The conflict for the covenant seed. Then God's commitment to his covenant plan. But also, thirdly, the compassion of the covenant God.

[7 : 36] First of all, then, the conflict for the covenant seed. The truth is that there have been enemies of the covenant gospel of God right from the very beginning. And so it will be for all the offspring of God's promise in Christ right till the very end of history.

Look at verses 8 and 9. The child grew, was weaned. Abraham made a great feast on the day Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian, whom she'd borne to Abraham, mocking.

Laughing. This is how the NIV translates it. The footnote in the ESV is quite right. Laughing in mockery. At one level, what we're reading about here is simply another story of human tragedy, a story of family breakdown, the end tale of sin, the muck-ups of this family's history, just coming home to roost.

And it's tragic. We know, don't we, that jealousy among parents and siblings from different parentages, it's a very common thing. And no doubt, we read this and we find Sarah's attitude pretty unfair, pretty wrong.

She seems to be jealous and vindictive. And we know, don't we, because we've read the story that it's all her own fault and Abraham's fault because of what went on with the foolish episode of surrogacy with this Egyptian maid, Hagar.

[9 : 02] And it's a story, it's the sort of thing that we're not all that unfamiliar with today. But of course, what's going on here is something of much deeper significance.

Much deeper. When verse 2 says that Isaac was, sorry, Ishmael, was laughing in mockery, remember Ishmael's now a teenager, this is far more than just normal sibling rivalry.

This is not just the jealousy of an older child now feeling that the young one's getting all the attention. It's something much, much more sinister than that. And that actually is why Sarah is so disturbed.

We don't know exactly what she saw from Isaac, but she certainly saw a manifestation of deep disdain, of rejection, even of hatred of Isaac by his half-brother.

And Paul tells us in Galatians 4, verse 29, that it was persecution, that it was spiritual persecution from the one who was born merely according to the flesh and the one who was born of the spirit.

[10 : 13] Or to put it in terms of the book of Genesis, the outright hostility, the enmity of the seed of the serpent for the promised seed of the woman. Now Ishmael's mocking laughter of Isaac is simply the manifestation of a pattern that has marked out the story of redemption from the very beginning.

And as I said, will do until the very end. Receives its first clear articulation way back in Genesis 3, 15, by God himself. Remember, he says to the serpent, he says to the devil, I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring.

And the very next chapter of Genesis demonstrates that very plainly in the hatred and the murder of Abel, the man of faith, by Cain, the man of this world.

And so it's been ever since. That's what Paul says to the Galatians. Those of the spirit of God are opposed and persecuted by those who are of the flesh. Get to the end of the Bible and Revelation chapter 12 pictures it very graphically right to the end of the world.

Remember, there's that dramatic vision of the woman who gives birth to a man-child and the dragon, the serpent, the devil is seeking to devour him. And when he can't overcome the man-child, the Christ of God, he seeks to make furious war on all the rest of her offspring on earth.

[11 : 39] All of those who follow the Lord Jesus. That is the pattern of redemption's history. And it's writ large on every page of the Bible.

Always. There are two kinds of laughter that surround the forward march of God's plan of salvation. There's joy and delight as there was, as we saw last time in verses 6 and 7.

The people of faith laughing with delight at what God is doing. But also, there's the laughter of mockery and hatred as in verse 8 and 9.

among those who reject the seed of God. I just think, think back to the birth of Jesus Christ himself. Read the gospel accounts. What do you read?

You read of joy and delight at his birth. Remember the shepherds, the wise men, Simeon and Anna, people like that. But also, you read of jealousy and of hatred.

[12 : 38] Think of Herod, the religious leaders. All of those who are opposed to the Redeemer. It's always the same. This is just the very beginning here of a redeeming pattern, a pattern of conflict for the covenant seed of God all through history.

And we need to recognize that pattern. We need to take it seriously because wherever the covenant seed of faith is being born, wherever the life of the Messiah is being established and rooted and secured for the future of his purposes of grace, wherever that is happening, there will be conflict and division.

There'll be joy. Yes, of course there will, but there'll be jealousy. There'll be rejoicing. But there'll also be rejection and revulsion.

That is an abiding pattern in God's redeeming plan. And you see it, don't you, all through Jesus' own ministry. Just read the Gospels. Just take Matthew chapter 9 as one example.

Jesus is doing marvelous works, marvelous words. And some people are full of joy. Never has anything like this been seen in Israel. They shouted with delight. But at the same time, there was others, weren't there, who were full of scorn.

[13 : 57] He's casting out demons by the prince of demons. He's a devil. And whatever the real, true gospel of the real, true Jesus is being proclaimed today, you will find exactly the same thing.

And Jesus warned us of that very explicitly in the parable of the sower. Do you remember? The seed will divide. Paul warned us that real gospel ministry is revelatory.

It always reveals. It reveals God to man, but it also reveals man's heart to God. And the gospel to the one is an aroma of life, but to the other, it's nothing but the stench of death.

And wherever there is true spiritual birth taking place, there is conflict and there is division. because the gospel of the promised seed, the gospel of God is a two-edged sword.

It divides between faith and unbelief, even as here within the professing household of faith. And so it was with Isaac's birth, you see, with all that it signified for God's promise of salvation.

[15 : 17] And Ishmael was shown up for what he really was. He was an enemy of the true faith. Even though he was circumcised, even though outwardly he belonged in the household of faith, he was part of God's professing church, you could see.

And that just goes to show us, doesn't it, that heresy and unbelief in the visible church, that's not a new phenomenon. It's been the pattern right from the very start. And therefore, conflict and division will always result when God's saving covenant gospel meets human sinful humanity.

Even within the visible household of faith, there'll be conflict, won't there, between the natural and the truly spiritual. And there'll be persecution from those who in their hearts, however much outwardly they may profess to be true to Christ, and His church, but inwardly they are mockers of the true gospel of grace and of the unique, the exclusive way of God's salvation.

Salvation that is by sheer grace, by electing grace, by the mercy of God alone and nothing of what we do. Salvation that is by proclamation of the gospel of the unique lordship of Jesus Christ to whom all must bow down, whatever their race, their creed, their background.

But it's always been like that. I remember some years ago reading a biography of John Newton, a great preacher and hymn writer, as I'm sure many of you have, reading about the hostility, the opposition that he faced from the established Anglican hierarchy.

[17 : 02] And he and other gospel evangelicals of his day faced that constantly. John Newton couldn't get anybody anywhere to ordain him because he was tired with the stigma of what they called enthusiasm or Methodism.

Those were the ecclesiastical swear words of the day, just as fundamentalist or evangelical or extremist or whatever it is today. In the end, he could only get ordained through the patronage of Lord Darkmouth, who was a peer of the realm and he was able to play on the sort of fawning bishop's willingness to ingratiate himself with a lord of the realm and therefore he ordained him.

The historian Trevelyan says this, Lord Darkmouth made interest in high episcopal quarters to obtain the ordination of John Newton, who was too much in earnest about religion to be readily entrusted with a commission to teach it, except as a matter of favor to a great man.

Well, it's been the same ever since. There's a very hilarious edition of Yes Minister that speaks about the appointment of a bishop that shows exactly that and it's no different today and it's pathetic, isn't it?

But that is the conflict that is the abiding pattern for the covenant seed, for those who are bound to a rejected Messiah and everyone, says Paul, everyone who desires to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

[18 : 35] they'll be mocked and laughed at and scorned in the world and worse even, sometimes, within the professing church because that church wants to ingratiate itself with the world.

And we've got to be realistic, says Paul, about our Christian walk, not naive. And of course, there's another conflict, a deeper conflict even, for the covenant seed as well, and that is the conflict within.

And Paul talks about that too, doesn't he, to the Galatian Christians. It's not just persecution between those of the flesh and those of the spirit, persecution without. But, as long as we remain in these earthly bodies, there's the same conflict between the flesh and the spirit deep within us, isn't there?

Because Paul says the desires of the flesh are against the spirit and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh because we've got an enemy within as well.

Peter calls it the passions of the flesh, the sinful desires, he says, that wage war with your souls. That means we're realistic about that too, don't we?

[19 : 54] You need to be very realistic about that, especially if you've just nearly recently come to faith. Because wherever the new birth of the spirit takes place in someone's life to make them a child of God, to make them a true seed, a true offspring of Abraham in Christ, that is a birth into conflict.

That's what we see here. We're born for battle. Because in that birth of the seed of faith, God puts enmity into us that wasn't there before.

He puts conflict into us with the world and the flesh and the devil. And it is the beginning of a lifelong battle against unbelief and disobedience and a battle for obedience and faith and faithfulness to God.

And that is what explains your Christian life. It's so important that you realize that because struggle and conflict is not a sign of failure and apostasy.

It's not a sign of falling away from Christ. It's the opposite of that. It's the evidence of the life of the spirit of God in your heart and your life putting you in conflict with the world outside and with the flesh within.

[21 : 11] And that ought to be a great comfort to us I think in our struggles. We should rejoice in that struggle in the fight of faith because it's the fight of real faith. It's the life of God in the soul of your human heart.

If you're at ease if you're acquiescing with apostasy and unbelief and wickedness that's something to be much more worried about. So it's a comfort although of course it's also a challenge isn't it because there'll be times always then when we have to be willing to make hard and painful decisions in that battle when we may have to send away forever things that are a mortal danger to the future of our spiritual lives and that may be activities that hinder us it may be certain behaviors or habits or pastimes maybe a relationship that hinders that mocks God's purpose in our lives because nothing you see can be allowed to hinder the purpose for which God has called us heavenwards in Jesus Christ and that's hard to come to terms with

I know but it's essential it's critical and that brings us to the second point you see which is the commitment of God to his covenant plan the very heart of this story makes it absolutely plain that God will not allow enemies of the gospel to hinder and to endanger his purpose of grace and salvation for the world he's absolutely committed to his purpose of covenant grace and so ever harsh it may seem and however much Sarah's motives may have been mixed and tainted and they surely were God says to Abraham in verse 12 you see you're wrong to be angry about this and you're naive to think Abraham that you can all just live happily ever after no the way of the flesh and the way of the spirit cannot be friends they are intractable enemies so listen to your wife Abraham she's right this time in the action that's needed even if maybe she's wrong in some of her feelings if my covenant of purpose and blessing for the world is to come to fruition then Ishmael must go it actually may be that Sarah is not as harsh in her attitude as it seems at first to us the scholars tell us that

Ishmael would have had a legitimate claim to be Abraham's co-heir because he was his son even though he was born in slavery but that right could be traded away for full freedom so Sarah's concern is for Abraham to have Isaac as the sole heir but at the same time Ishmael in losing that right would nevertheless gain something he would gain the status of a fully free man to go and establish his own household but in any case verse 12 is very clear isn't it God himself affirms his total commitment to the one chosen seed the one chosen way to the uniqueness of his plan of salvation do as she tells you he says because through Isaac through Isaac alone shall your offspring be named through Isaac alone all these promises are to be fulfilled that illustrates another great principle a great pattern of God's working that is that sometimes radical action is needed in the work of

God which happens when God exposes unbelief and opposition that has to be dealt with lest his saving work of grace will be hindered and spoiled or even destroyed and we see that in the scriptures very often sometimes division and parting of the ways is the only way that has been a hallmark of the history of the gospel let me put it another way although certainly the unity the visible unity of the professing church is something to be cherished it is not something to be cherished at all costs the truth of the gospel and fidelity to God's one unique revealed way of salvation for all people is more important to God than the outward unity of those who bear the marks of his professing family as part of the visible church of Christ and where there's a refusal of his true promised seed where there's a rejection of his sovereignly declared authority then division is worth inevitable and necessary and that's why there was a separation of the

[26 : 17] Christian church in New Testament times from the unbelieving mass of Jews who refused Jesus who refused the promised seed the Messiah and the astonishing accusation of the apostles of Christ who likened the unbelieving Jews of their day to being the offspring of Hagar of the slave woman that's how Paul talks in Galatians 4 you who think you are Jews who think you are the seed of Abraham you are like Ishmael you are actually rejecting God's one promised one you are refusing to submit to him as the only way for your salvation and the same way you see Paul insists that believers separate from those who want to try and keep the things of the flesh and the things of the spirit together by adding works of the law and circumcision and so on and other things to faith in Jesus Christ because only if you have those things will you authentically be part of the real church no says the apostle to add to God's one covenant way of sheer grace through Jesus

Christ his promise see that actually is to subtract from the gospel so much that you destroy the gospel so you have to resist that utterly have nothing to do with those who teach that let those people be cursed says Paul Christ's apostle it's very painful that isn't it it's very painful for Christians to have to resist to even have to break fellowship with others within within the outward family apparently of the church whether it's in Galatia in 60 AD or whether it's today in our world but sometimes it's essential because God is utterly committed to the future of his unique covenant plan of salvation for all the nations through the unique promised seed the one and only Jesus Christ and through the proclamation of that one true gospel of Jesus Christ and so his people must be utterly committed to his one gospel of sovereign grace however unpopular that might be at times whatever whatever painful partings of the way that may mean and it's meant painful divisions hasn't it from

Genesis chapter 21 all through history think about how Paul himself had to separate himself from Peter another possible although thankfully Peter learned his lesson and came back to sense but Peter's stance undermined God's true covenant grace think of the painful command that Paul had to give to the church in Corinth to expel a brother out of the church because his conduct was destroying gospel truth think of the pain of Martin Luther and others who were martyrs in the time of the reformation who could do no other but stand on the truth of God against the weight of the professing church of the day look at what many in the in the Anglican communion are having to do today to maintain the truth of Christ and his gospel to the derision to the criticism of the worldly church particularly in the west here that calls them divisive and schismatic and against unity and so on well we know all about that don't we if the gospel divides and it keeps on dividing between the flesh and the spirit and it always will and believers and Christians that are as committed as

God is to his gospel that one covenant plan for all peoples we will have to face painful parting of the ways always that's why it's impossible it's impossible to build a gospel church and to keep a church true to the gospel and focused on the gospel and prioritizing the needs of the gospel it's impossible to have that without division because the flesh wars against the spirit always and because some who profess faith well at heart are shown up at times to be simply of the flesh and they will oppose the things of the spirit more and more and that's because all of us inhabit bodies of flesh as Paul reminds us we all tend don't we not towards the truth but away from it left to ourselves we tend to drift away we tend to drift back by nature away from the kingdom's focus in our lives and there's always a challenge always a challenge when the gospel makes demands of us there'll always be those who don't want their lives challenged more and more with more commitment to God's plan and purpose always be those who resent the call of the gospel on their time or on their spouse's time or on their wallet or increasingly these days on their thinking they grow uncomfortable that's a very in vogue term today isn't it

I'm uncomfortable with whatever it is about the radical nature of real Christian discipleship real Christian teaching real Christian testimony that puts us more and more and more at odds with the world around about with our friends with our workmates with some of our family with all the things that they think and they accept and they aspire and perhaps they even celebrate with pride and devotion we know that don't we we often see that gulf operating and opening up and we see that with some within the professing church that gulf opens up between them and others in the church who are captivated with the gospel of Christ who are thrilled with the gospel's advance and we see that as such people drift to the periphery and eventually drift away somewhere else that's more comfortable that's less challenging or sometimes they just find some issue to be angry about and march away with a sense of self-righteousness that's the sort of thing that we do isn't it and friends that is something that we need to come to terms with that's something we need to be very realistic about as Christians serving together as a church in any age if we don't do that if we don't see that truth that began right here in Genesis it's so easy for us to get discouraged and I think that's especially so for us living in western culture today where things are changing very rapidly and soon

[33 : 03] I think it is going to be increasingly impossible to live in our country a life of real Christian discipleship and at the same time remain an acceptable part of normal polite mainstream society or maybe even mainstream employment our Lord Jesus makes clear to us that where his church is cherishing the gospel where it is constantly rising to the call of gospel mission there will be always painful separations because as he says to us in the parable of the sower when hardship or persecution arises on account of the word some will fall away and when the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the world some will prove unfruitful God and Jesus teaches his followers that so that they will know that radical commitment to his covenant plan is not going to be painless in life and there will be painful divisions and losses and disappointments wherever a church is seeking to be radically true to the gospel radically true to the mission of the gospel wherever christians are committed to these things we will experience what abraham experienced i think this episode must have been perhaps one of the most painful ever in abraham's whole household of faith but it was essential wasn't it for the fulfillment of god's wonderful plan for his family's future and for the world and that's also true of of painful separations and divisions and partings in the work of the gospel today it doesn't change and we have to learn that it's part of the cost of radical commitment to the covenant plan of god but though we must learn that we must also learn this because we must never be glad about these sorts of partings it must never be harsh or careless or in any way feel feel smug or feel superior or feel self-righteous and in fact less we're tempted to feel that way do not miss verses 15 to 21 because that is why they're here they're here to ensure that we can't miss the compassion of our covenant god because god cares even for the enemies of his covenant despite their opposition to him and to his way of salvation isn't the mercy of god isn't his condescension absolutely astounding verse 13 you see he'd assured abraham that because ismail was his son he would still bless him with an earthly future and in verse 18 there he proves that he meant what he said he hears ishmael's cry of distress of verse 17 you remember ishmael's name means god hears and he reassures hagar about the promise that he had made about ishmael's future all those years ago back in chapter 16 verse 11 he does have a future and he will become a great nation still he will not die here the ishmael had been rejected because he refused to submit to god's revealed truth about salvation he would not accept isaac and submit to that as the only source of blessing not just for him but for that whole family he would not bow the knee as it were to god's anointed one and instead he mocked him he opposed him and yet although he rejected god's appointed way god did not cast him off utterly he was not beyond god's goodness and his mercy in his life god still

shows him such care such compassion and he does that doesn't he even to those outside his chosen family even to those who mock his ways who are at odds with his purposes who separate themselves from him extraordinary isn't it and yet it's true because jesus tells us this is the god who makes the sunshine and the rain fall on the just and the unjust and so if on the one hand we must take seriously god's unswerving commitment to his one unique seed to his one way of salvation to his one true gospel fulfilled in jesus christ alone and we must and we must be willing to reflect that commitment in our lives however painful it is and it may be very painful at times and however misunderstood we may be we have to separate ourselves at times from those who will undermine and hinder that gospel nevertheless equally on the other hand surely we must also surely reflect god's compassion and god's care for those outside this church even those who are enemies on the account of the gospel you see because the god of verse 12 is also the same god of verses 17 and 18 now that would be a very very important message i think for mooses first hearers of these words wouldn't it israel they knew that god wanted them to be totally committed to his covenant they were about to enter the promised land and god kept saying to them be holy be separate do not join with the pagans of that land you're to reject all of their false religion and yet they were also to reflect god's extraordinary compassion to those pagans weren't they the law of mooses was full of instructions to care for the stranger for the sojourner for the alien for the foreigner read euteronomy it is full of instruction to show god's compassion to those who are not his own and that's important isn't it for the christian church today to remember as well because we are to reflect god's unswerving commitment to his covenant gospel yes but also we're to reflect god's compassionate heart listen to the lord jesus on this you've heard it was said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy but i say to you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust if you love those who love you what reward do you have do not even the tax collectors do the same if you greet only your brothers what more are you doing than others do not even the gentiles do the same you therefore must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect that makes a difference doesn't it to the way that we think about those who are enemies of the gospel whether those who who oppose us from the outside or very painfully sometimes those who who mock us from within or in some very specific situations today think about this in the land where abraham lived today the land of israel and palestine you'll find many enemies won't you of god's promised seed jesus christ indeed two groups jews and muslims who both persecute christians a great deal in israel and palestine today and indeed elsewhere one group traces their ancestry to isaac the other to ishmael and yet the new testament puts both of them in the same category doesn't it opposed to the true seed of salvation jesus christ paul's very clear in galatians unbelieving jews he says are of the

flesh they're opposed to the spirit and yet in romans 11 verse 28 he says they're enemies of the gospel of god as regards the gospel but he also says they're beloved for the sake of their forefathers and paul's heart's desire is to love them and to seek to bring them to christ through the gospel like the westminster larger catechism says that when we pray the lord's prayer and pray thy kingdom come that means that we're also to pray for jews to come to christ just as we are to pray for gentiles or think of muslims in many parts of the world today perhaps they are the fiercest enemies of the gospel and they proudly trace their ancestry back to abraham through ishmael and yet verse 13 here reminds us doesn't it that ishmael too is a son of abraham even though he was an enemy and god himself showed earthly care and compassion and mercy to him and his seed and surely that should also be our attitude shouldn't it as christians today to muslims who are around about us not to destroy them and persecute them as enemies of the gospel as it seems that unless many muslims do want to do to christians but rather towards them to reflect the love of our father in heaven to be true sons of our father in heaven who makes his son of the gospel as well as to the gospel as well as to brothers and sisters in fact isn't that god's calling to us as god's people towards all who are in this dark world all who live as enemies of the cross of christ to love our enemies to pray for those who persecute us so that we may be true sons of our father in heaven who makes his son to rise or the evil as well as on the good is genesis chapter 21 just ancient history well it is ancient history but it's also isn't it god's living word and it shows us the beginning of a pattern the pattern of the persecuted seed of god that always always brings division and there's a pattern there all through history it's a pattern that will be true right to the very end of history and that this chapter is here to teach us these things today so let's learn what god wants us to learn about conflict to be realistic about the conflict that all god's true offspring will face as people of the crucified savior and about commitment to be committed totally to the unique gospel of god's covenant truth whatever painful choices it demands of our lives but also about compassion to be equally determined to display the compassion of our covenant god who shows his love and his mercy even to those who mock him and are his enemies you says our lord jesus are the light of the world let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven amen let's pray together almighty god who shows to them that are in error the light of thy truth to the intent that they may return into the way of righteousness grant unto all of us in christ's church that we may turn away from things contrary to our profession and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same

through jesus christ our lord amen