

STUDY GUIDE

CHURCH NAME
BOOK OF GALATIANS
FREE AS SONS
GALATIANS 3:26 - 4:7
06/28/2017



MAIN POINT

We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and through adoption we are give the position and privileges of sons.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What influences your perception of yourself and those around you? What things shape your identity? Why did you identify these things?

If you had to tell someone the three most important things about you, what would you say?

It is easy to let the world around us define who we are. Culture inundates us at every turn with ideas about who we are and who we should be. However, as Christians there is one basic reality that defines who we are: we are known by God. When God looks at you, He sees His child—one who has been adopted into His own family. All believers have been forever changed by the presence of the Holy Spirit in them. The ministry of the Holy Spirit radically changes our core reality and allows us to see ourselves the way God sees us.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 3:26 - 4:1-2.

Compare and contrast Paul's idea of a son and a slave. What rights does a slave have? How does that differ from a son's rights?

When Paul mentions a son, why is being a son not dependent on gender?

In Galatians 4:2, what does Paul mean when he refers to guardians and managers?

Paul is alluding to a well-known legal and ceremonial process in the Roman world called the Liberalia. Celebrated on March 17, Liberalia involved Roman fathers deciding whether their boys would officially become men. On that day the son would be adopted by his father and take on the full rights of an heir. Before that day—though a child of his father—the son was

functionally a slave with no rights or privileges to his father's estate, merely living under the watch and protection of guardians and managers. After that day, the son's primary relationship would be with his father.

What is the prerequisite for receiving the Holy Spirit?

How does the gospel radically alter our status before God?

Paul uses a Roman custom as a metaphor for our relationship with God. The prerequisite to receiving the Holy Spirit is sonship. When we are saved, our legal status before God is changed to that of a son and an heir. We now enjoy all the rights and privileges of our Father and our primary relationship is with Him.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 4:3-5.

What do you think "fullness of time" means? What does it mean for the work of Christ?

Based on verse 5, what do we receive as a result of our redemption?

How does Christ transfer His rightful status as a Son to us? In what must we believe to receive the status of son?

Before the advent of Christ, the Jews (much like the minor described in verses 1-2) had been enslaved to the law. They had yet to attain the full inheritance as sons of God. Likewise, the Galatians had been enslaved to the pagan idolatry of the surrounding culture. The "fullness of time" refers to an appointed time. It is a time purposefully set to accomplish a prepared task. In this instance, the appointed time refers to the coming of Christ and His redeeming death. Believing by grace and through faith in the life and ministry of Jesus, we are adopted into God's family.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ GALATIANS 4:6-7.

What is significant about the word "Abba"?

What do you think about when you see the verb "crying" in verse 6? Do you think this is an experience that is common to most believers? Why or why not?

The word "Abba" is an Aramaic word that was translated into Greek. It is an affectionate title that young children would use for their fathers. When we cry to God, we are not reaching for a distant Father, but a loving daddy. We are able to do this because of the Spirit working within us. The word used for "crying" is a word that carries with it the idea of passionate expression. This crying is not chiefly about the words that come out of your mouth but the disposition of your heart that will produce these instinctively. As we see more of Jesus in the gospel and are overwhelmed by the goodness of God, our hearts cry out in praise.

What events in your life lead to the instinctive cries that Paul describes in these verses?

Read Romans 8:15-17. How is the ministry of the Spirit described in these verses?

The cries of the Spirit through us are both an ordinary and extraordinary experience. When we are adopted as sons, we have an immediate, irreversible change in status before God. However, it is also an objective experience in the life of a believer, because at times the Spirit is more or less active in our lives. As we grow as children of God, we learn to see ourselves the way God sees us and depend more deeply on the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Increasingly, the Spirit will bear witness to us

that we are children of God. The Spirit cries out through us and for us as we live dependent on His power.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

How can you increasingly make room in your life for the ministry of the Holy Spirit this week? What attitudes, actions, and practices foster His work in your life?

How does knowing and being known by God combat the pull back to the slavery of legalism?

How would you explain to a new believer the struggle of returning to slavery to the ways of the world?

PRAY

Praise God that because we have been adopted, we live with a new identity before God, enjoy intimacy with God, and are guaranteed an inheritance.

COMMENTARY

GALATIANS 3:26-29

3:26. Verse 26 is the key to understanding this passage. Paul countered the divisive teaching promoted by the Judaizers by declaring that “all” the Galatian believers, Jews and Gentiles alike, had received the promise as evidenced by their relationship with God through Christ. That relationship came, not through keeping the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. Therefore, they were “sons of God.” They had entered full adult sonship. The services of a pedagogue to guide them were no longer required. They could enjoy the privileges and freedom of their sonship.

3:27-29. Not only are those who have faith in Christ Jesus “Abraham’s sons” (v. 7), but they are also adopted sons of God (4:5-7; Rom. 8:14-17). Paul used the image of a person emerging from the water after being baptized to put on new clothes. The equality and unity spoken of here is of a spiritual nature—in Christ. Paul had just discussed at length that the Jew has no spiritual advantage over the Greek (Gentile), and now he says the same equality is true for social and gender distinctions. No one people group or gender is to be exalted above others. To be Abraham’s seed is the same thing as being his “sons” (v. 7), but now the additional element of being heirs is introduced, previewing 4:7 (Rom. 8:15-17).

GALATIANS 4:1-7

4:1. In the ancient world, an underage heir had no right to his inheritance and was temporarily in the same legal situation as a slave, owning nothing.

4:2. “Guardians” (Gk “epitropoi”) does not refer to the same idea as in 3:24-25 (see note there), where the Greek word is “paidagogos.” In this case, a “guardian” was a slave who protected the underage heir, while stewards were trustees responsible for the heir’s other needs until he came of age (the time set by his father). The analogy was to illustrate that God had everything under control during the period of the Mosaic law, setting things up perfectly for the coming of Christ.

4:3. The elemental forces of the world are called “things that by nature are not gods” in verse 8 and “the weak and bankrupt elemental forces” in verse 9. Since these descriptions are linked to the observance of “special days, months, seasons, and years” in verse 10, it appears they are related to religious observances based in the laws and rhythms of nature.

4:4. The Greek word translated “completion” is “pleroma,” indicating that Christ came at the perfect time. Factors that made this such a suitable time included: worldwide peace (Pax Romana), an excellent road system, and the dominance of one language all across the empire (Koine Greek). By these means the gospel spread in ways that would not have been possible in earlier times. “God sent His Son, born of a woman” looks back to God’s promise in regard to “the seed of the woman” in Gen 3:15, and it may allude to Christ’s virgin birth (Isa 7:14; Mt 1:18-25). “Born under the law” refers to the fact that Jesus knew what it was like to live under the Mosaic law. This phrase implies that He perfectly kept the whole law, which no other human being could do (see notes at Gal 3:10 and 3:21-23).

4:5-6. One big difference between unbelievers and the underage heir of verses 1-2 is that, apart from a relationship with Christ, all people are actually spiritual slaves to sin, which is made clear by the law. Thus, it was necessary for Jesus to die; to redeem (Gk "exagoraz;" "set free by purchase") sinners out of the slave market. A second great difference is that Christians receive adoption as sons instead of being a son of the bloodline. Jesus Christ is the only Son naturally related to God the Father. All other sons (including females, since "sonship" was a legal status) are by adoption. "Abba" means "Father" in Aramaic, but it has a personal tone, such as "Daddy" or "Papa."

4:7. Paul's appeal to those in the churches in Galatia was that the person who tries to be justified before God by works is a slave to the Mosaic law. But he who is justified by faith in Christ is no longer a slave, but a son, with full rights as an heir to God's infinite treasures.