

Paul's Letter to the Galatians

Notes by Doug Hamilton

Galatians Part 4) Being Sons in the Kingdom of God

John 1:12-13 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, *even* to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

In the opening words of the Gospel of John, we are reminded of a frequent principle of the scriptures. It is a common theme through the Bible to associate the people of God as being the children of God.

- Matthew 6:9 “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.
- Matthew 23:9 “...One is your Father, He who is in heaven.”
- 1 John 3:1 “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are...”

What does it mean to be a child of God?

The aim of this lesson is to examine the words of Paul and attempt to better understand the concept of being a child of God from God's perspective.

I) Being a child of God means we share in the family of God.

Galatians 3:26-29 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

- In the previous lesson, we discussed the argument of Paul to the Galatians that the Christians are the descendants of Abraham through faith, not through the works of the Law. In verses 3:26-29, Paul was making a conclusion that it is through faith in Christ that we are made sons of God.
- According to Bible historian and scholar William Barclay, if a gentile man wished to become part of the Jewish faith he had to do three things. 1) Be circumcised 2) offer sacrifice and 3) be baptized. The details of the Jewish baptism is as follows:
 - The man had to cut his nails and hair prior.
 - He had to be completely undressed.
 - The baptismal had to contain 40 seahs (roughly 66 ½ gallons) of water.
 - Confession had to be made before three men referred to as the *fathers of baptism*.
 - The water had to cover every part of the body.
 - While in the water, parts of the Law were read and benedictions were pronounced upon him.
 - When he came out of the waters of baptism it was announced that the conversion was complete. It was never considered a conversion until after the baptism.
- So complete was the gentile's conversion to the Jewish faith that he was given a white garment of purity to wear, symbolic of the new life that he pledges unto God the Father.

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- There was a common prayer among free Jewish men of the first-century. They daily offered thanks to God, *“For not making me a gentile, a slave or a woman.”* It is interesting that here Paul uses the reverse order to prove that the barrier of division is over when we enter Christ.
- Summarizing the opening verses: Paul is reminding the Galatian Christians that when they took their faith in Christ to the baptismal, something marvelous occurred. All the barriers that made us different were removed. We were all made children of God through the promise given to Abraham. We all became one in Christ! All the female and male Christians, all the free and slave Christians, all the Jew and Gentile Christians, all the black and white, big and small, tall and short, sick and healthy, rich and poor, all could enter into the family of God at baptism through faith in Christ Jesus! At that point Jesus gave us a white garment of purity and sanctification because we were born into the family of God!
- Being a child of God means that together we are in the family of God!

II) Being a child of God means that we share in the freedoms of God.

Galatians 4:1-4 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything,² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.³ So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.⁴ But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

- Under Jewish Law, the son became a man after the age of twelve. Under the Greek law a son became a man at age twenty, following a two year direction of the state. Under Roman law the boy became a man sometime between the ages fourteen and seventeen. He was simply given an adult toga and announced as attaining manhood. In any case, Jew, Greek or Roman, they were considered a son, but under a guardianship of the father.
- In all cultures there was a designated time to grow up and be responsible. Prior to Paul coming and preaching the gospel of salvation to the Galatians, they were living the pagan lifestyle. *Galatians 4 8: However at that time, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.*
- When they came to Christ they were freed from the slavery of sin and death. The problem was that they went beyond what they were taught and tried to succumb to the Law of Moses. This put them at risk of slavery to the Law. *Galatians 4:9-11 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years.¹¹ I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.*

When we become a child of God, we are freed to serve Him with sincerity and truth. We are free to walk with Him every step of the way. We can go to bed at night knowing that we have been freed from our sins to serve Him for the rest of our life!

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- Galatians 5:1 It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.
- Galatians 5:13 For you were called to freedom, brethren; only *do not turn* your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Being a child of God means that we have been freed by Him to live an open and honest life through His Son. *1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.* Jesus said in *John 8:31-32 "If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; ³² and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."* You have been freed; now walk in the freedom, for you are a child of God! That we can endlessly share.

III) Being a child of God means that we share the Spirit of God.

Galatians 4:6-7 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

- When we were born into the kingdom of God, with it came the full inheritance of God. This inheritance begins with the down payment of the Holy Spirit, for the Bible tells me so.
 - Ephesians 1:13-14 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.
 - Acts 2:38-39 Peter *said* to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ "For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself."
- We that are the children of God share in the Spirit of God in many ways.
 - We must understand that through the same Spirit that we share in the resurrection from the dead. *Romans 8:11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*
 - We must understand that through the same Spirit we share in our prayers unto God. *Romans 8:26-27 In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; ²⁷ and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*
 - We must understand that through the same Spirit we share in the eternal blessings as well as the sufferings of Christ. *Romans 8:15-17 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ The Spirit Himself testifies with*

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our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

- Being a child of God definitely confirms that we are sharing the same Spirit of God! The phrase “Abba!” is Aramaic for *Father*. Simply put, when combined with the latter *Father* it communicates a deep sense of endearment. “MY FATHER!” It is a phrase that communicates a deep passionate possessive emotion for God.

Closing Thought:

- It is a phrase that Jesus used in the Garden of Gethsemane. With that in mind, let us allow Jesus to communicate the closing point.
- Mark 14:32-36 They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here until I have prayed.”³³ And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled.³⁴ And He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.”³⁵ And He went a little beyond *them*, and fell to the ground and *began* to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by.³⁶ And He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.”
- At the very moment of great stress and trouble in Jesus’ life, as He face the cross of crucifixion, He was able to pray, “*Abba! Father!*” At a time where He should have felt extremely distant from God, He ended up ever so close to God.

Conclusion:

Being a child of God can mean many things. For us from this lesson it is about sharing.

- 1) We share the Family of God.
- 2) We share in the Freedoms of God.
- 3) We share in the Spirit of God.