



"REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

GALATIANS LESSON 4

In our lesson this week, we will be looking at what it means to be adopted into God's family. The Galatians were no longer slaves, but they were trying to "work" their way back into the family by keeping the Law. Paul now builds a case on sonship, and He certainly doesn't mince any words. Paul is open and honest with how he feels about what the Galatian Christians were doing. William Neil describes Paul's style of writing this way: "Every statement is a thunderbolt. He is a man with a brilliant mind, a trenchant controversialist, a fearless fighter ... a man whose life was 'hidden with Christ.'" Way to go, Paul! Tell it like it is!

First Day

1. Please read Galatians 4:1-31. Observe the facts you find. What are the key verses in this chapter?
2. How does this chapter relate to chapter 3?
3. Read each section. Write one or two sentences to describe the main thought or point of the section. List any repeated words or phrases

Section 1: Verses 1-11

Section 2: Verses 12- 20**Section 3: Verses 21-31**

4. How many times is the word "free" used?
5. Define the word "heir." How many times is it used in this chapter?
6. Compare 4:11 with 4:20. How are they similar? Where does Paul's tone seem to change?
7. By using the illustration of slavery, what is Paul trying to show us?
8. What does the word "adoption" mean? Explain how we are adopted into God's family. Use Romans 8:12-17, Ephesians 1:5, and Galatians 4:5-7 for your answer.

This concludes our lesson today. I pray that by the end of our lesson, we will truly understand the significance of being a child of God. Let's rejoice in being able to call God our "Abba Father."

Memory Verse of the Week: "Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Galatians 4:7

Second Day

Review your memory verse. Are you a slave or a son?

In chapter 3, Paul reminds us that God gave Abraham a promise, and then gave Moses a law, which didn't annul the promise, but made it more necessary. That promise was fulfilled through Jesus Christ, and everyone whom the law drives to Christ inherits the promise, which God made to Abraham. Paul now continues the discussion he began in 3:23-26 about what it means to be sons of God.

In the ancient world, there was much more of a division between childhood and adulthood than there is today. There was usually a certain predetermined age when a child would officially become of age and take on the responsibilities and privileges of adulthood. John MacArthur explains it like this: "Until the age of twelve, a Jewish boy was under the direct and absolute control of his father. This ceremony was called bar mitzvah. In ancient Greece, a boy was under his father's control until about the age of eighteen. They would have a coming of age ceremony and the boy's long hair would be cut off and offered to the god Apollo. At the Roman ceremony, boys would take their toys and offer them in a sacrifice to the gods as a symbol of putting childhood behind them. It was to this custom that Paul alludes in his comment, 'When I became a man, I did away with childish things.'" (1 Corinthians 13:11)

The illustration Paul uses of a child was easy to understand for all of them. A child was usually governed by a slave until that specific time. He didn't differ much from a slave, but at the time set by his father, that status changed.

Paul tells them that they were children, under the guardianship of the Law, until the coming of Christ. They moved from childhood to adulthood with the coming of grace. Why, then, would they now want to regress and go back to their childish ways?

1. Read Galatians 4:1-11. Compare the position of a slave with that of a son. What rights are enjoyed? How is their relationship different with the father? What are their responsibilities?

2. What do you think Paul means by the phrase "the elements of the world" in verse 3?

3. Answer the following questions using verses 4-5.
 - a. Who came?
 - b. When did He come?
 - c. How did He come?
 - d. Why did He come?

4. What is Paul emphasizing by the phrase "born of a woman?" Why is that so important?

It's important to see that Jesus didn't only come to "redeem" us, or buy us back, but also to "adopt" us into His family. He didn't only set us free, but took us in as well. He came in the "fullness of time," meaning that God had prepared the world socially, religiously, and culturally for the birth of the Messiah. It was God's perfect and appointed time.

5. According to verse 6, what (or whom) allows us to call the Father "Abba"? (Also see Romans 8:14-16)

"Abba" is an Aramaic word translated "Papa" or "Daddy." It is a term of endearment used by young children to their fathers. What a wonderful kind of relationship we can have with our Heavenly "Abba"!

12. How long has it been since you've crawled up on your "Abba's" lap and bore your soul, telling Him your deepest secrets? Why not take some time today doing just that?

That's it for today. Tomorrow we'll look at exactly what we are "heirs" to. Have a great day and remember to spend some time with your Heavenly Father. He loves you!

Third Day

Work on your memory verse. Are you living like an "heir"?

1. Read Galatians 4:1-11 again. Paul says that we are now "heirs." Look up the following verses to learn more about our inheritance.
 - a. 1 Peter 1:3-5
 - b. Ephesians 1:3-5
 - c. Ephesians 1:13-14
 - d. Romans 8:17
 - e. Ephesians 3:6
 - f. Revelation 21:7
2. Why do you think Paul refers to the Law as the "weak and beggarly" elements in verse 9? (Does the Law itself make you strong?)
3. Do you think Paul is telling us not to observe days like Christmas and Easter? What point was he making? What was their motive?

In verse 11, Paul lets his feelings all hang out. He is afraid that all the time he has spent teaching them has been futile. It seems like he wants to grab them by the shoulders and give them a shake, saying "Wake up!"

Verses 12-20 is considered a parenthesis as he stops a moment to share some of his personal feelings on the matter. We can hear his tender heart for the Galatians coming through these verses. Let's continue on.

4. Read Galatians 4:12-20. In what way did Paul want the Galatians to become like him? (vs 12)

Paul must have "become like them" when he visited them on his missionary journey. Although he was a Jew, he became like the Gentiles they were, which is in accordance with his statement in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22.

5. How was Paul first received by the Galatians? What was their attitude now? How did that make Paul feel?

Verse 13 tells us that Paul first preached to them "through infirmity of the flesh" or "because of bodily ailment." We don't know for sure what he meant. The Book of Acts doesn't mention illness as the reason for his visit to the Galatian cities. John Stott says this, "Presumably, unless he had an attack of some chronic condition, he caught an infection on the way to Galatia, which detained him there. Probably this disease, whatever it was, is the same as the "thorn" of 2 Corinthians 12:7, which was also 'in the flesh' and a physical weakness or infirmity. Some people have guessed that Paul caught malaria in the mosquito-infested swamps of coastal Pamphylia, at the time when John Mark lost his nerve and returned home (Acts 13:13). If so, he would quite naturally have headed north and climbed on to the invigorating mountainous plateau of Galatia. But when he arrived in Galatia, he was gripped with great fever. Whatever the disease was, it evidently had unpleasant and unsightly symptoms. It seems to have disfigured him in some way. Further, if we read verse 15 in its context, it appears that his illness affected his eyesight, so that, if it had been possible, the Galatians would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him."

6. Who stole their affection? How did they lose their joy?

The Galatians treated Paul like an angel, but as soon as they didn't like his message, he became their enemy. What's up with that? We must be open to all of the truth, not only the part we like. This seems to be quite common today. People pick parts of the Bible they like and throw out the rest when it doesn't fit their lifestyle or opinions.

7. Are you committed to obeying **ALL** of the Word of God? Are you guilty of picking and choosing the parts you like and disregarding the rest? Are you open to correction if your lifestyle contradicts Scripture?

8. These Judaizers had zeal, but they were certainly lacking something. What was it? Read Romans 10:2.

9. Do you have zeal coupled with knowledge? Why is it important to have both working together?

The Judaizers seemed to be flattering them with the motive of winning them to their side. Paul says that if they follow them, they will be excluded from the freedom that can be found in Christ.

10. We know that Paul is their spiritual father, but in verse 19, it sounds like he's also their mother! What point is he trying to make in this verse?

Paul is expressing his deep love for them. He longs to see them conformed into the image of Christ. Stott points out that "the difference between Paul and the false teachers is now clear. The false teachers were seeking themselves to dominate the Galatians; Paul longed that Christ be

formed in them. They had a selfish eye to their own prestige and position; Paul was prepared to sacrifice himself for them, to be in travail until Christ was formed in them."

11. Have you ever felt like you "labored" over someone's conversion? What does this tell us about Paul's passion? What's your passion?

12. Why are our motives so important as we share Christ with others?

Paul wishes he could be with them and not have to talk to them so severely. Even that statement reveals his heart for these people. We're going to stop here for today, but I pray that Paul's passion for the Gospel is contagious. I pray that we would present the Gospel to those we love ... passionately! See you later!

Fourth Day

Memorize your verse. How should that truth affect your life?

1. Let's begin today by reading Galatians 4:21-31 and see how Paul continues to prove his argument.
2. Why is Paul appealing to the Law?
3. For a background of what Paul is saying, read Genesis 16:1-4 and 21:1-13. What facts do we know about the birth of Isaac and Ishmael? How were their moms different? Make some type of chart that contrasts Sarah and Hagar.

Paul uses the birth of Isaac and Ishmael as an allegory, showing that the two sons and their moms represent two religions, Judaism and Christianity. He's reminding them that Abraham's true children are not those with a perfect Jewish genealogy, but those who believed as Abraham did. Then in verses 28-31, he applies his allegory to us.

The term "Law" is often used when referring to the Old Testament (Romans 3:19), but here Paul is referring to the first five books of Moses, which are also called the Pentateuch.

4. What happened on Mount Sinai? Read Exodus 19:1-8.

5. Can you explain what point Paul is making in these verses? Why are we all either an "Ishmael" or an "Isaac"?

6. Why is the birth of Ishmael referred to as being "according to the flesh"? (Hint ... what was their motive?)

The descendants of Hagar through Ishmael moved into Arabia, which is the area to the east and south of the Promised Land. They came to be known as Arabs and their territory was called Arabia. It was between the sons of Hagar and Sarah that the modern Arab-Israeli conflict began some 4,000 years ago and continues today (vs 29).

In verse 25, Paul is talking about the Jerusalem that was present at the time, because the Jews of the day were still in bondage to the Law. In verse 26 Paul refers to the Jerusalem above, speaking of the Heavenly Jerusalem (Philippians 3:20; Revelation 21-22). In the Jerusalem above we will be free from works and the bondage of the Law. Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1 in verse 27, applying it to Sarah.

7. How does Paul personalize it for the Galatians in verses 28-31?

8. How do these verses remind us that we, as believers, should expect to be persecuted by those "of the flesh"? Although it was Isaac who was scorned by his brother (Genesis 21:9), he was also the one who became the heir. How does a Christian receive the "pain of persecution" but the "privilege of inheritance"?
9. Are you an "Isaac" or an "Ishmael"? Are you enjoying your freedom in Christ?

Verse 30 is an interesting verse. John MacArthur says this: "As Sarah had Hagar and Ishmael cast out of Abraham's house (Genesis 21:10-14), so will their unbelieving descendants, those who live by works of the flesh, be cast out of God's household (Matthew 7:22-23; 25:41). No one outside the covenant of grace will receive anything from God." **Wow.** This is important stuff. I pray that each of you have made a commitment to Christ. There is nothing in this world that is important than that decision. Let's rejoice in the free gift of salvation. See you tomorrow!

Fifth Day

Write your verse from memory.

Today we will be taking some time to review this chapter and understand how it applies to us.

1. How does being a "son (or daughter) of God" affect how you live?

2. What point or truth in this chapter specifically spoke to your heart?

3. Is there any sin or religious ritual you are "enslaved" to right now?

4. We are free in Christ. What are the boundaries and limits of that freedom?

5. What are some examples of liberties taken by Christians that actually are stumbling blocks for others? (Is it, then, a liberty?)

6. How does "religiosity" remove our joy?

7. I read this question in a LifeChange Series Bible Study and it is very thought-provoking. I wanted you to have to search your hearts the way I did, so ... here it is. "What are some "Ishmaels" in your life -- the things that keep you from living out God's promises to you? Purpose to eliminate them, even though they are as dear to you as sons, because they are interfering with what God wants to do in your life." Hmmm...