

The Gospel in Galatians ***From Slaves to Heirs***

Lesson #8 for November 19, 2011

Scriptures: Galatians 3:26-4:20; Romans 6:1-11; Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14,15; Romans 9:4,5.

1. This lesson covers some very significant issues in Christianity. Paul was determined to break down any barriers that might remain between Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female. When we join ourselves to Christ through baptism, we are to become a part of the body of Christ; every human being is eligible. There are no distinctions remaining.
2. Paul must have prayed the famous prayer of the Jewish male many times in his earlier days, "Lord, I thank you that I was not born a Gentile, a slave, or a woman." In Galatians 3:28,29; Romans 3:22; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 3:11; and Ephesians 2:15, Paul went all out to reject Jewish male exclusiveness. Modern Jews hate Paul for these words.
3. The Jewish males were not the only ones that had such attitudes. The Greek males also felt quite superior. Do we?

Much of the Greek tradition could be summarized in the thanksgiving variously attributed to Thales, Socrates, and Plato that "I was born a human being and not a beast, next, a man and not a woman, thirdly, a Greek and not a barbarian" (*Diog. Laert* 1.33; *Lactant. Div. Inst.* 3.19).

4. But, Paul did more than just eliminate former distinctions. He invited every person who was baptized into the body of Christ to become a true heir—one with Christ Himself.
5. The Chinese Christian Watchmen Nee put it like this when asked about it by a new convert who was discouraged:

"No matter how much I pray, no matter how hard I try, I simply cannot seem to be faithful to my Lord. I think I'm losing my salvation.' Nee said, 'Do you see this dog here? He is my dog. He is house-trained; he never makes a mess; he is obedient; he is a pure delight to me. Out in the kitchen I have a son, a baby son. He makes a mess, he throws his food around, he fouls his clothes, he is a total mess. But who is going to inherit my kingdom? Not my dog; my son is my heir. You are Jesus Christ's heir because it is for you that He died.'"—Lou Nicholes, *Hebrews: Patterns for Living* (Longwood, Fla.: Xulon Press, 2004), p. 31. Quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sabbath, November 12.

6. We may be sinners; we may do all sorts of bad things. But, if we claim to be Christians, God is ready to accept us as His children and heirs.
7. Paul used the word *sons* instead of *children*. Why was that? In biblical times, the sons were the ones who received the inheritance. Daughters were expected to marry and become a part of a different family. Furthermore, the children of Israel came to be known as the "sons of God." Paul wanted to be clear in stating that Gentile sinners could also be a part of that family—children of Abraham. (Galatians 3:29)
8. But, the physical act of baptism does not accomplish such a change. We must be born of the Spirit and clothed in Christ. (Romans 6:1-3) This means that Christ becomes the Center of our lives. If we are going to receive that amazing inheritance, then Christianity—our new identity—must affect every part of our lives.

9. How does this actually work? By beholding, we become changed. See *Great Controversy* 555. How do we become like Christ? We look to Him and try to copy His life.
10. Do our friends and associates at work and even our casual acquaintances recognize Christ in us? (Matthew 5:16) What change takes place so that people see God instead of us?
11. What is implied by being an heir with Christ? Doesn't the whole universe belong to Him? Think of the incredible privileges that are included with that designation. At the third coming, God is going to move His headquarters to our planet! (Revelation 21) But, there are also huge responsibilities. In the Old Testament, the children of Israel lost their special relationship with God because while claiming all the privileges of that special relationship, they ignored the responsibilities. Are we going to make that same mistake?
12. During the last evening that Jesus spent with His disciples on this earth, after washing their dirty feet and seeing Judas get up and leave, He said to the eleven, "I don't want you to be slaves any longer; I want you to be My friends." (See John 15:15) Which would you rather be? A slave? An heir? Or, a friend? Which do you think is truly closer to the Father? A slave? A friend? Or, an heir? Not every son is close to his father. He may be the inheritor of the father's estate, but they may not even be on speaking terms.
13. But, Paul went on to say that those who become a part of the body of Christ become so close to Him that they refer to Him as "Daddy" or "Papa." (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6) Would we dare to address God in that way? What is unique about a child's relationship with his father? As Watchman Nee has suggested, the child may not be very responsible. But, does the child have to earn his father's love? Or, his mother's love? Children may still require a *paidagogos*—a guardian and guide, someone to discipline them and teach them the right way—but they are still children of their parents.
14. Read Galatians 4:1-3. What is implied by "the elemental things of the world" or "the ruling spirits of the universe" in Galatians 4:3? In light of the way Paul used this expression in other places, (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 5:12) it seems likely that he was talking about the "elementary steps in the Christian life."
15. Are those "elementary things" somehow analogous to the "shadows of the good things to come" described in Hebrews 10:1-4?
16. Read Matthew 18:3. In what sense are Christians to be childlike? Many people point to this verse and suggest that to be childlike means to be willing to believe even things that are somehow unbelievable. Does this mean that true Christians are to be gullible?
17. What is the most important characteristic of a child? Isn't it his capacity to grow? We become alarmed if a child fails to grow physically and even more if he fails to grow mentally. Would it be true that if a child fails to grow spiritually, that is great? Or, would it be a disaster? (Ephesians 4:13-16; Hebrews 5:11-6:3) Kids ask a lot of questions! If your picture of God has not changed in the last year, you are worshiping a graven image.
18. Read Galatians 4:4. What is the meaning of "the fullness of time"? Several reasons have been suggested as an answer to this question. Rome ruled the world, and there was relative peace (the *Pax Romana*). There was a common language as well as relatively easy communication and transportation. There was a common culture which made it easy to spread the gospel.
19. But, there is another reason why this was the fullness of time even though it is often not recognized or acknowledged. The sect of the Pharisees had come to dominate the culture

in Palestine. They seemed to be the super-religious people. But, it was those same Pharisees who were most determined to get rid of Christ. They were people who seemed to dedicate their whole lives to serving God, and they ended up crucifying the very God they claimed to be serving! The Pharisees were no better than the pagans! This demonstrated that the ditch on each side of the road is just as deep and just as treacherous!

20. Do you think the Jews of the Old Testament would have killed Christ? Or, would they just have ignored Him as they did so many of the prophets? Why this difference?
21. Why was it necessary for Jesus to become fully human, to be born to a human mother, and to live a life of an ordinary human being? Many answers have been given to this question. (John 1:14; Galatians 4:4,5; Romans 8:3,4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 2:5-8; Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:14,15) These verses suggest that Jesus needed to live a perfect yet fully human life in order to prove that it can be done. He demonstrated His glory, the righteousness of God, and the attitude of a servant. By His death He destroyed the Devil, and He dealt with sin—even “doing away with sin.” He came to show us what a Christian life is really like—to be our Example.
22. Implicit in Galatians 4:4,5 is the idea that Christ was fully God. What do the Scriptures say about that? See John 1:1-3,18; Philippians 2:5-9; Colossians 1:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-14.
23. Many of our Christian friends would suggest that it was necessary for Christ to come and live and die in order to be legally qualified to pay the price for sin. What does that mean? Does justice require the death of Someone to pay for sin? Who is it specifically that is requiring that death? Is it the Father? Did Jesus need to do something to assuage or propitiate the Father’s wrath against sin? Does this suggest that the Trinity is not always in perfect harmony? Does the Son need to plead with the Father in order to get Him to forgive us?
24. What really happens to a person when he is baptized? The physical baptism in water is not the key point. What God is looking for is a true baptism by the Spirit. If we become true children of God, then we can believe that our sins have been buried with Christ. More than that, as He was raised to life, so we can live a new Christian life. If we do that, God will count us as His heirs, and we will be eligible for all of the rights and privileges of children alongside Jesus Christ. Do we become actual children of God?
25. How well did Jesus deal with Satan when He was here on this earth? Look at His handling of Satan during the temptations in the wilderness. (Matthew 4:4-11; DA 759)
26. God tells us that when we are baptized, He adopts us into His family. What does adoption mean to Christians? What did Paul, and what does God promise to those who are adopted?
 - 1) Final victory over the Devil and his temptations. (Hebrews 2:14,15)
 - 2) Final freedom from death. (1 Corinthians 15:56,57)
 - 3) Freedom from sin and all that implies. (Romans 6:22)
 - 4) Freedom from the condemnation of the law. (Romans 3:19-24; Galatians 3:13; 4:5)In light of these statements, have we truly become the children of God?
27. Even in the Greco-Roman world, there was a well-known legal adoption code. It included the following provisions:
 - 1) The adopted son became the true son of his adopter.

- 2) The adopter agreed to bring up the child properly and provide the necessities of food and clothing.
 - 3) The adopter could not repudiate his adopted son.
 - 4) The child could not be reduced to slavery.
 - 5) The child's natural parents had no right to reclaim him.
 - 6) The adoption established the right to inherit. (See Derek R. Moore-Crispen, "Galatians 4:1-9: the Use and Abuse of Parallels," *The Evangelical Quarterly*, vol. 61, no. 3 (1989), p. 216) [Some of the famous Caesars were adopted as children]
28. We can see even from this ancient law code that the privileges of an adopted son or daughter are essentially the same as those of a true child. Thus it is that we can be free to call our heavenly Father, "Daddy" or "Papa." (Galatians 4:6) What is the difference between a child and a friend?
 29. How far did Paul go in associating with Gentiles? Was he ever able to overcome his Pharisaical prejudices? Was it easy for him? (1 Corinthians 9:21)
 30. How can we become more and more like God? Jesus had an incredible relationship with His Father even while He was living on this earth as a human being. Did God actually direct His life moment-by-moment? What role should our devotional life play in our relationship with God? (Mark 1:35-39)
 31. Read Galatians 4:8-20. Finally, Paul became almost exasperated in dealing with the Galatians. In effect, he asked, "You really don't want to become slaves again, do you?"
 32. What is implied by paying attention to certain days, months, seasons, or years? Was Paul referring to the seventh-day Sabbath? If Paul meant to include the seventh-day Sabbath, he certainly could have mentioned it specifically as he did elsewhere. (Colossians 2:16) Paul suggested that those legalistic requirements being promoted by the Judaizers in Galatia were leading the Galatian Christians back into bondage. Do we really believe that God would give human beings a law that led to bondage?
 33. Would Jesus have kept the Sabbath if He thought it was a sign of bondage? Or, is it our attitude about these things that mostly involves the bondage?
 34. Even in our day, conservative Christians tend to follow a lot of rules. Those rules include dress codes, what is appropriate in worship, diet, etc. How do these requirements fit into the idea of Christian freedom?
 35. Human beings tend to be very selfish—even to the point of harming themselves. Do we ever refuse the help that God offers because we want to "do it ourselves"?
 36. Those of us who believe in the great-controversy, trust, healing model of the plan of salvation believe that God has a wonderful plan for our lives. We are to become more and more like Him by beholding and incorporating more and more of the Christian ideals into our lives. Isn't that what children do as they watch their parents and grow to become like those parents? In the same way, are we becoming the children of God? Or, are we too occupied with the things of this world?

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