

The Epistle to the Galatians
Lesson #13 • Galatians 4:1-7

“Heirs of God”

[No. 5 of 5 Statements on Justification by Faith Alone.]

• HANDOUT •

► This is the 5th and *final* installment of Paul's statements on Justification by Faith Alone. In this study we have gone from being Heirs with Abraham to being Heirs of God.

In order to show just how impossible it is to be justified by the Law, Paul once again uses contrast to make his points. For this final argument Paul uses the example of a young man growing into adulthood.

This is often difficult for us, because the significance of these verses require that we have a working knowledge of the ancient customs surrounding this transformation process.

The chart, which follows, shows the three main cultures in Paul's day and the differences within those cultures regarding a boy's journey to manhood.

<p><u>The Hebrew Culture within Judaism</u></p>	<p>A boy passed from childhood to manhood shortly <u>after</u> his <u>twelfth</u> birthday.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► At that age he was <u>automatically</u> considered to be a “son of the law.” ► <i>The Bar & Bat Mitzvah [Male & Female] celebration at age 13 came later during the medieval time frame</i>
<p><u>The Greek Culture</u></p>	<p>A boy became an adult, at approximately age <u>eighteen</u>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► At that age - at the festival of the <i>Apatouria</i> - the child legally passed from the <u>care</u> of his <u>father</u> to the care of the <u>state</u>. This transfer would last for the rest of his life. [<i>This was socialism at its zenith.</i>]
<p><u>The Roman Culture:</u></p>	<p>There was no set time when a boy became an adult; it was determined at the <u>discretion</u> of his father.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► Whenever the father decided his son was mature enough to be an adult, the actual celebration of his son's <u>right of passage</u> would be delayed until the Festival of Liberalia which took place each <u>March 17th</u>. ► At the Festival, the boy was formally and legally <u>adopted</u> by his father and <u>publicly acknowledged</u> as his son. ► At this celebration, the boy would physically give up his "praetexta" [his "<u>childhood</u>" toga]. In its place, he received his "virillis" [his "<u>adult</u>" toga].

Q: Granted, this is interesting information, but how does it affect our understanding of scripture?

Galatians 4:1-2 • What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.

Q: How did the people in Paul's day view the status of a minor child?

Q: What does Paul mean when he say that “*the child is subject to guardians and trustees?*”

Q: If Paul does not use the expected terms for “guardians and trustees” what does he use?
He uses two words:

The first:

The second:

Q: What occurred when the son formally and legally became an adult?

Q: Was this only for the sons or were there the same provisions for daughters?

Paul now proceeds to use this Roman custom of a child becoming an adult to illustrate the Believers spiritual condition

Galatians 4:3 [NAS] • So we too, when we were children, were held in bondage under the elementary principles of the world.

Q: What does the phrase “in bondage under the elementary principles of the world” mean?

[1]

[2]

Q: How do these two translations apply to Paul's teaching here in Galatians?

► This same principle is restated in Paul's letter to Ephesus & the writer of Hebrews touches on this same concept:

Ephesians 6:12 • For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Hebrews 5:12-14 • In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who, by constant use, have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

Q: Of these two interpretations, which best embodies Paul's teaching to the Believers in Galatia?

Galatians 4:4-5 · But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Q: What is the significance of the word “but?”

Q: What is the “fullness of time” referred to in this passage?

Q: All babies are “born of a woman” so why does Paul emphasize this fact?

Genesis 3:14-15 · Then the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, you are cursed more than all animals, domestic and wild. You will crawl on your belly, groveling in the dust as long as you live. And I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel."

Q: Why is it significant that Paul used the word “sent” when describing the Father's actions toward His Son?

Philippians 2:5-11 · Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death— even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Colossians 1:15-17 · Christ Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Q: What does it mean that God's Son was born "under Law?"

Q: What is the significance of having the "full rights of being God's sons?"

Galatians 4:6 • Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Q: What does "Abba Father" mean?

Q: What doctrine does this passage firmly establish?

Q: What do we learn about the Holy Spirit from this passage?

Q: What does this passage tell us about our salvation?

Paul summarizes ...

Galatians 4:7 • So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Q: There is a change from the plural "sons" in verse 6 to the singular "son" in verse 7. What is the significance of that?

Q: The word “so” connects to what previous concept?

Q: As God's heirs, what is it that we inherit?

Ephesians 1:3 • "Every spiritual blessing in heavenly places is ours in Christ Jesus"

John 14:2-4 • In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

Q: When Jesus says, “you know the way to the place where I am going.” What did He mean?



Next Time • Lesson #14

~~ A Return to Bondage ~~

Galatians 4:8-11

