

STUDYING GALATIANS

BIBLE STUDY OUTREACH @ 1984, 1993

LESSON 10
Galatians 4: 1 - 7

Sonship And Inheritance

Most of us find before and after pictures fascinating. They tell us what has happened, how much progress is made and they encourage us to keep on. It doesn't make any difference whether it's remodeling a house, getting a new hair style, or the struggle to successfully lose weight. Whatever it is, the pictures say, "There is hope, keep trying! There can be changes if you don't give up."

God's Word has much to say about before and after. That is what this passage of scripture is about. It shows us that everyone can have a "before and after". It takes place when Christ is received into the heart. When this has occurred one might well say, "Before, morally, I found myself unable to handle certain things that compelled me to sin. After, there was power for me to overcome those things." Or perhaps it was, "Spiritually, before, I had no hope, only judgment. Afterwards, I knew that God had made me His child and given me eternal life. My whole person was changed." The before, and after give us striking differences. God has elevated those who have trusted His Son to new positions as daughters and sons AND as joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ! It should be our daily prayer as we study Galatians to seek understanding as to WHO we are and WHAT we have, so that we can be led by the Holy Spirit to worship and praise God in a new and wonderful way.

Many people do not understand who belongs to God. They think that everyone is automatically God's child, that everyone will automatically go to heaven when death comes. This is simply not true! It can happen; that is God's purpose for each of us, but it is not done automatically! Instead, there is a before stage for all of us. The before stage is that in the beginning each of us lives under rules and there are serious penalties if we fail to keep them. This is not just in some religions, it is in every religion. There are rules and there are penalties for failure to keep the rules. God says all have sinned and fallen short of His glory. This means failure to keep His rules, for God is Holy and they that come to Him must be holy also. Everyone has some understanding that there is a Holy God; even if he doesn't understand Who God is, he knows there is a God. God puts this knowledge deep within each person. Some may deny this knowledge and say they are agnostic, but they protest too loudly; their very protest is acknowledging God and reveals their struggle against Him. Their hearts are full of rebellion toward the God they denounce; this began before man sinned, before the flood, before the giving of the law. We know that with the befores there are also the afters. After man sinned God promised a Savior. After the flood God reaffirmed His promise, After the law all God's promises were fulfilled by Christ's redeeming blood, which fulfilled the law. We are no longer in bondage to the law for we live by God's marvelous grace. This is the wonderful after side, cleansed by the blood of Jesus which was applied to our sin. Our spiritual birth took place at that moment. H.A. Ironside wrote these words pertaining to the after spiritual birth; "Sonship is more than a new birth. Through that we become children of God. This was true of believers in all dispensations. But now by the Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of adoption, we become sons. This is the distinctive blessing of the present dispensation of GRACE. Old Testament saints were as children in their nonage. New Testament Christians are sons who have attained their majority and are joint-heirs with Christ. We are all children of God by the second birth and sons of God by adoption." (Permission unnecessary, from The Continual Burnt Offering.)

The Old Testament saints were truly children of God, but even though they were true children they didn't

differ from bond servants or slaves. Under the Law they never called God “Father” in acknowledgment of His Fatherhood. They were as children under tutors and governors, for their own good. In the fullness of time Christ came and died. His death brought about a new way for man to receive his inheritance. It is this we are seeing unfolded in Galatians. It is very important for us to understand this. Paul told the Christians at Rome about the Holy Spirit being given and their sonship established. He said, “Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now then, if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His suffering in order that we may also share in His glory” (Rom. 8:12 - 17, NIV). Earlier in Galatians Paul explained the eternal aspect of his relationship with Christ. He said, “I have been crucified with Christ: it is no longer I that lives, but Christ lives in me...”

The Old Testament plan was effective as far as it went. It revealed the holiness of God and it demanded that man repent and be cleansed. However, it never supplied the cleansing power that did the work in men’s hearts. Only Christ could do that. So the necessary requirement was provided by God, in that what was impossible under law, God did out of His grace, mercy and unlimited love.

Paul’s analogy of Christians being heirs in full possession of their Father’s estate brings home the truth that before we came of age, that is, before we became Christians, we were like the younger son of a father. We were servants, with no rights as sons. Paul’s comparison of the inheritance to our salvation is a matter of great importance. It is the perfect illustration of our before and after life. Before we receive our inheritance we are poor wretched beggars, unfit for God’s kingdom. After, we are rich, blessed with all spiritual blessings, In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace which He lavishes upon us. We receive wisdom and He gives us understanding of His Word. Our Heavenly Father gives us all that He gave Jesus and we are to continually receive from the gracious hand of the Father throughout eternity.

We can sense the excitement in Paul’s words as though he were personally writing to each of us; “Don’t you know you are no longer a slave (to sin)? You are an heir!” Think about this. It will lift your shoulders, straighten your back and raise your head high with joy! You are a free child of the Most High God, the Everlasting Father. Never slip back to before, because you will only waste your time. Use it wisely; it belongs to God.

Lord, I thank You for salvation,
For Your mercy full and free,
Take my all in consecration,
Glorify Yourself in me!

Anonymous

Praise and thank Jesus for your after life!

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SCRIPTURE TO MEDITATE UPON:

“And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal body through His Spirit, who lives in you” (Rom. 8:11). Memorize this.

Think about what Paul is saying to you. Let the truth and power of the verse penetrate your whole being. Paul shows that when the Holy Spirit indwells a person he is controlled and involved by the same Spirit as Jesus had in the days of His flesh. The Spirit is the power within you:

- 1) to be raised from the dead;
- 2) to be related to God and His family of believers;
- 3) to be responsive to the Father's love;
- 4) to be rescued from temptations of sin;
- 5) to be reminded to pray in the Spirit to the Father;
- 6) to rely upon the Father for counsel;
- 7) To recite the Father's name with overflowing love for the privilege of being His child.

QUESTIONS:

1. Review: Share how you were blessed by last week's notes or questions.
2. Give the seven words underlined in the Meditation. Tell which has the most meaning for you personally and why.
3. Suggestion: Reread the notes, then tell of a before and after experience you have had.
4. a. Tell what Gal. 4:1 says and why Paul writes as he does.

b. How can this be related to spiritual life?
5. a. What does it mean to be of nonage?

b. Read John 14:26. Tell how it could be used to explain Gal. 4:2.

c. What does Eph. 1:3 say we have? What does this mean?

d. Write out what Col. 2:8 says about “basic principles of this world” mentioned in Gal. 4:3, which keep us in bondage?

6. Study Gal. 4:2 - 4 and tell why so much time elapsed before God's plan of salvation came into effect.
7.
 - a. Tell what the law was meant to do, what it could not do and what knowledge we need to become 'grownup' and 'inheritors'.
 - b. Give Jesus' wonderful news found in Mark 1:15. What are men to do ?
8.
 - a. Tell what "in the fullness of time" means in relation to God's dispensation of "grace".
 - b. How did God actually make this change?
9. Verse 4 mentions a woman; what does Matthew 1:20 say about this woman?
10. What does Lev. 12:3 tell you that relates to Gal. 4:4?
11.
 - a. Give the phrase in v.5 which explains God's purpose regarding the law.
 - b. Give the legal transaction from v.5 that explains what happens when Christ is received.
 - c. What does Matt. 20:28 tell you that gives you joy?
 - d. Read John 3:16 and tell who is included in God's plan. What does this mean to you?
12.
 - a. How does God verify our sonship? v.____
 - b. How does this knowledge reassure you and keep you from being doubtful of your salvation?
 - c. Give several scriptures that confirm your answer to 12b.
13.
 - a. What is the believer's privilege in God's gracious act of making him His child? v.____
 - b. What motivates this response?
 - c. What does Eph. 1:13 say and what is your response to it?
14.
 - a. Give the wonderful news Paul speaks of in v.7, then read Rom. 8:16 and give its added information.
 - b. What important truth that concerns others beside the Jews is found in Eph. 3:6?
15. Have there been added insights in this lesson that have given you new growth spiritually? If so, please tell what and how.