



SESSION 2

I AM A CHILD OF THE KING

▶ **The Point**

Jesus makes us full members of His family.

▶ **The Passage**

Galatians 4:1-7

▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

Most people on planet earth will work their entire lives and never make a million dollars. But Prince George Alexander Louis was worth millions the day he was born. Prince George is part of the British royal family. As the son of Prince William and Kate Middleton, he's currently third in line to the throne. His great-grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II, is reportedly worth more than \$450 million; as the nation's reigning monarch, receives an annual payment close to \$13 million. Prince George is in line for all this wealth and privilege.

When we hear stories like this, our tendency is to roll our eyes and think: *Who deserves that kind of privilege and wealth? He hasn't earned a single dime of what he's been given!* That may be true—but the same could be said of any who follow Jesus. When we come to Christ, we're given an incredible inheritance! And, as we'll see in this session, we've done absolutely nothing to earn it or deserve it.

▶ **The Setting**

Paul wrote Galatians, probably from Syrian Antioch, after he completed his first missionary journey, which included a stop in southern Galatia. (See Acts 13–14.) During that visit, Paul preached in key cities. People believed in Christ. Churches were established. After Paul departed, questions arose over whether conversion to Judaism and the Jewish law would improve the new believers' standing with God. The Book of Galatians gives Paul's answer to these questions: by faith in Christ alone we are full members of God's family!

What does the Bible say?

Guardians and managers

(v. 2)—These words refer to the first-century protectors, overseers, managers to whom a father would have assigned decision-making authority over an underage son.

Abba (v. 6)—An Aramaic word that is similar to “Daddy” in English. It is familiar and affectionate. Jesus addressed His heavenly Father as “Abba” in prayer. (See Mark 14:36.)

Galatians 4:1-7

¹ I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything,

² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.

³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,

⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes

Notes



DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 85 of the PSG: **“What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘royalty?’”**

Note: Encourage group members to be specific. What images come to mind? What emotions? What memories?

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Supplement Question #1, above, by playing a few minutes’ video of an official royal ceremony—the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace, for example. Lead

your group to discuss Question #1 after watching the video. (Also, remember that Great Britain is not the only monarchy in the world; other examples include Bahrain, Jordan, Denmark, and Thailand.)

Note: You can find a few sample videos on the Leader Extra! portion of our blog: biblestudiesforlife.com/adultextra.

GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 86 of the PSG. Introduce the theme of our royal (and divine) inheritance by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 86 of the PSG: **“Jesus makes us full members of His family.”**

PRAY: Transition into the study by expressing your gratitude for the privilege of approaching God as “Father.” Praise the Father for His goodness to each person in your group, and pray that each of you would learn something new about living as a member of God’s family.

Notes section with horizontal dotted lines for writing.

Galatians 4:1-3 Commentary

[Verse 1] We were “far off” from God (Eph. 2:13). Our sins had built barriers between us and God. (See Isa. 59:2.) We were in bondage under a sentence of guilt and condemnation. The Galatian believers had been outsiders. Paul emphasized that apart from Christ, people are outsiders looking in. He compared an **heir** who is still a **child** with a **slave**. Although the heir of a rich man is, in one sense, **owner** of great wealth—in the sense of actual rights and privileges during childhood he is like a slave.

[Verse 2] The heir is not his own man with practical authority over what he is destined to inherit. **He is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.** In a wealthy first-century home, a trusted household slave was often the heir’s guardian. The trustee’s role was to oversee financial resources. Trustees were prudent managers. They were the decision-makers regarding resources. The heir was not yet prepared to make decisions maturely and prudently. So, the trustee, not the heir, had the practical authority.

[Verse 3] Paul applied the “heir—slave” analogy by saying that **in the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.** With the words “we also,” Paul grouped himself (a Jew) together with the Galatians (many of whom were Gentiles). “Enslaved to the elementary principles of the world” probably includes two closely related realities. First, these “principles” likely involve basic principles or rudiments of religion, special days and seasons (see Gal. 4:9-10; Col. 2:15-20), and occasions on which religious rituals would take place. Second, the “principles” probably also involve spiritual forces that exploit religious systems and rituals to enslave persons. They are “those that by nature are not gods” (Gal. 4:8), though they may be “gods” to their devotees. Real spiritual forces can be at work to enslave people in ritualism.

Before turning to Christ, many of the Galatians had probably performed countless pagan rituals to avoid malice from and curry favor with “gods” and spirits. They had believed that good fortune depended on performing the right rituals at the right times.

It’s not surprising that Paul described former pagans as having been in slavery to basic religious principles and the spiritual forces exploiting these principles. What’s stunning is that Paul implied he and fellow Jews were under the same kind of bondage apart from Christ. The forces that enslave persons through ritualistic effort are willing to use either pagan or Jewish rituals. The “principles” of the world keep Jew and Gentile alike vainly running in their own strength rather than resting in Christ’s sufficiency.

The teachers who entered Galatia after Paul and taught “a different gospel” (Gal. 1:6) were apparently saying circumcision and coming under the Jewish law with its rituals would lead to status inside God’s family. After all, Jesus was the Jewish Messiah. He said He came to fulfill the law. (See Matt. 5:17.) Knowingly or not, the teachers were peddling fear that Christ was not enough.



STUDY THE BIBLE

Notes

FULLNESS OF TIME

- ▶ Consolidated rule led to "Pax Romana" (Roman peace)
- ▶ Roman roads and shipping lanes made travel widespread
- ▶ Many religions were tolerated
- ▶ Greek language was universally known and used
- ▶ Jewish Temple still stood
- ▶ Messianic fervor swept over Israel
- ▶ Spiritual hunger and thirst for knowledge throughout the empire

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." (Galatians 4:4)

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How can we understand these verses in light of our past, present, and future?

Galatians 4:4-5

4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, **5** to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

READ: Galatians 4:4-5 on page 88 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Encourage group members to read the bullet list on page 88 of the PSG in order to see two reasons why God sent Jesus at just the right time.

LEADER PACK: Display **Pack Item 8**, "Fullness of Time," to show group members why the first century AD was the ideal time for Jesus to accomplish His mission in our world. Encourage group members to share which items they find interesting.

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 90 of the PSG: **"What are the implications of being adopted into God's family?"**

DO: Direct group members to complete the activity "Assessment: Sons and Daughters" on page 89 of the PSG.



Are you taking full advantage of your new status as a son or daughter of God? Use the following questions to take a closer look.

How often do you approach your Father each day through prayer?

[Rarely] _____ [Regularly]

Do you confess your mistakes to your Father or seek to hide them?

[Hide] _____ [Confess]

Do you allow the world around you or your Father to define who you are?

[The World] _____ [The Father]

Do you seek to accomplish goals through your power or through the power of the Holy Spirit?

[Your Power] _____ [The Spirit's Power]

Galatians 4:4-5 Commentary

[Verse 4] God made provision in Christ for adoption **when the fullness of time had come.** This means that it was the determined time—not a random point in history. At just the right time, **God sent forth his Son.** Jesus is uniquely God’s Son. Jesus “was declared to be the Son of God in power . . . by his resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4). Jesus is “the Christ, who is God over all” (9:5). So, Jesus is the Son of God and God the Son. The deity of Christ is important for many reasons. One reason is that it means God Himself stepped into the world in Christ to accomplish salvation for humanity. He did not expect the Galatians or us to work our way to Him. He came to us to save us!

Obviously, Paul believed in the deity of Jesus. He also believed in the full humanity of Jesus. God saw fit for His Son to be **born of woman.** Jesus was born to a human mother. The Son of God took on flesh. He became fully human. He could identify with the men and women whom He would redeem.

In addition to being “born of woman,” God’s Son was **born under the law.** That is, Jesus was born under the Mosaic law. He shouldered the requirements of the law as no one else could. He was “one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

[Verse 5] In His unblemished moral perfection, the Son of God was able **to redeem those who were under the law.** To “redeem” is to buy out of slavery and for freedom. Apart from Christ, all people are enslaved to sin, guilt, and condemnation. To be clear, the law is not bad. It is not contrary to God’s purposes. (See 3:21.) It is also not the way to be justified before God and access the privileges of heirs. Faith in Christ as our Redeemer is the only way to receive that gift: “We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses” (Eph. 1:7).

God accomplished our redemption in His Son **so that we might receive adoption as sons.** “Adoption” is a beautiful image for salvation. Many people are deeply moved that God set out intentionally to secure us as His adoptive children in Christ. Whether other people value and choose us or not, God values us and has chosen us in Christ. An employer, team leader, or family member may overlook or reject us. God has chosen and accepted us. We can live in the humble confidence that comes from knowing God as our Father.

There is no distinction among those who “receive adoption.” There is, however, a great distinction between those who have received adoption and those who have not. Christ has done what is necessary for our adoption. We must receive what He has provided. Then we will be part of His family.

Galatians 4:6-7 Commentary

[Verses 6-7] By adoption, we have been included in God's family. We have the status of sons. Through the Holy Spirit, we also have the wonderful assurance of experiencing closely a personal relationship with God.

Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. The God who sent His Son to redeem us has sent the Spirit to all of us who are redeemed. Just as all who have received adoption are sons, so all who are sons have received the Spirit in their hearts. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5). Christianity is about more than facts, evidence, logic, and doctrine. Christianity is not about less than these things—it's about a personal relationship with the Spirit of God!

Many people wonder whether or not they are having the full experience of the Holy Spirit that God intends for His people. On the one hand, we can be sure that if we truly belong to Christ, we do have the Holy Spirit. If we don't have the Spirit, we don't belong to Christ at all. (See 8:9.) On the other hand, there may be greater fullness for us to experience. We are to "be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). We are to pray for the full measure of the Holy Spirit in daily experience. We are to yield more fully to the Spirit. We are to walk by the Spirit and increasingly bear the fruit of the Spirit. (See Gal. 5:16,22-25.) This is the privilege of the child of God.

The Spirit applies the benefits of our relationship with God by prompting us from within our hearts to cry out "**Abba, Father!**" In a healthy father-child relationship, there is both ease and confidence in communication. A loved child can speak freely with his or her father, expressing joys and fears and longings. So it is between us and God.

The word *Abba* is a warm and familiar Aramaic word for "Father." During Jesus' earthly ministry, He used "*Abba*" to address His Father when He was pleading with Him in Gethsemane. (See Mark 14:36.) So, when Jesus was feeling the heavy burden of the cross bearing down upon Him and was clinging to His Father, the word *Abba* rose from His heart. Astoundingly, the Spirit of God prompts the child of God to call out to God the Father with the familiarity of the Son of God! In Christ, I can address the Father as Christ addressed the Father.

In Christ's redemptive work and your experience of the Holy Spirit you can have assurance that **you are no longer a slave, but a son**. The Galatians did not need circumcision and law observance to enter fully into God's family. They were in. You and I are in, if we're in Christ. Therefore, we trust in Christ alone. We live by God's Spirit. Each of us can rest in our standing with God as a full **heir** in Christ.



Read the article "Childhood and Milestones in the Greco-Roman World" in the Winter 2017-2018 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Previous *Biblical Illustrator* articles "Heir: A First-Century Understanding" (Winter 2013-2014), "A Child's Status in the First Century" (Summer 2011), and "A Slave's Status in the First Century" (Fall 2008) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator.

