

Riverview Baptist Church
Sunday School Teaching Plan
November 29, 2015
Galatians 4:1-11
“You are God’s Mature Child!”

Memory Verse:

“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.” Galatians 4:4-5

The Big Idea:

Sermon Scripture: The sermon will be the tenth in a series of expository sermons on Galatians.

Sunday School Scripture: Galatians 4:1-11

ESS: Believers in Jesus have a new identity in Christ. We are children of God because of the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

Preparation:

Read through this passage at least twice, slowly. Read from two different Bible translations.

Galatians 4:1-11 (NIV)

¹What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ²The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world.⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ⁶Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*” ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

⁸Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. ⁹But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? ¹⁰You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

Presentation

Here Paul uses an extended metaphor to describe the relationship of Christians as God’s mature children who have come out from under guardianship into full responsibility.

An Illustration for Roman Culture:

Identify things that you “couldn’t wait to be able to do” when they were younger. Once you reach that age and that ability, do you ever want to go backward to being a child? Well, sometimes we might want to for an hour or a day. But the privileges of adulthood are pretty good. The privileges of being a Christian and having a grown up relationship with God are even better. We certainly don’t want to go backwards and revert back to being spiritual babies.

Today we are learning that we who are believers in Jesus have a new identity in Christ. We are children of God because of the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. We must then reject the old identity and structures of life that governed us before our salvation.

1. **Immature Children are similar to slaves within Roman Culture.** Verses 1-3

- a. While under age:
 - i. No different than a slave
 - ii. Owns the entire estate but can't enjoy it
- b. Subject to:
 - i. Guardians: A person in charge of minor children
 - ii. Trustees: A person in charge of the administration of a household
 - iii. Until the Father says the time is up! Here this is consistent with Roman customs of granting adulthood to boy at ages varying from 14-17 depending upon the circumstances.
- c. Before Jesus came, all people were like immature children in their relationship to God!
- d. Law was a tutor: Galatians 3:24, a tutor i.e. a guardian and guide of boys. Among the Greeks and the Romans, the name was applied to trustworthy slaves who were charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys belonging to the better class. The boys were not allowed so much as to step out of the house without them before arriving at the age of manhood.
- e. Elemental things were our master: verse 3, any first thing, from which the others belonging to some series or composite whole take their rise, an element, first principal. Some translators call the elemental things, the ABC's, or building block principles of life.

Why is it difficult for Christians to give up legalistic thinking and behavior?

What are some examples of this type of thinking and behavior? (Keeping tradition of men without questioning them, Bible translations preference becoming THE Bible for everyone, believing people are saved by their adherence to the "old path" or the "way it's always been", rejecting something "new" because it is "new".)

2. **But now, for those in Jesus, the oversight of "other things" has been outgrown:** verse 4-5

- a. The natural laws and the OT Law together have been replaced in the life of the Christian. They tutor, guardian, trustee, elemental principles have been outgrown because of the coming of Jesus and the receipt of His Spirit in the believer.
- b. The time for this transition was according to the father in Roman law, verse 2, and is according to the Heavenly Father in the Divine plan.
- c. Fullness of time: When God's timing had been achieved. At the right time!
- d. Reminiscent of the Birth of Jesus narrative in Luke 2:6 NIV - *While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,*
- e. God sent His Son: Divine timing, Divine planning, Divine power, Divine presence
- f. Born of a woman, born under the Law: Jesus was born into the real human condition physically and spiritual. He didn't just appear to be human he was fully human and fully divine.
- g. To redeem: Divine Purpose, to purchase out from under the Law those who are under it and who are unable to redeem themselves.

- h. That we might receive adoption to sonship: Here the consequence of redemption is made clear. Believers are redeemed from one dependent condition under the Law into a free condition in Christ. The redemption is into sonship as mature heirs of God the Father. This is the contrasting circumstance to that defined in verses 1-3; immature sons are redeemed from that condition into a new, better and lasting condition of maturity.

The Christian has not rejected guidance or outgrown the need for help, but rather God has declared Him to be of age of relationship. The Father is still sovereign over His offspring. But the relationship is now direct instead of indirect. The relationship is of a completely different type.

What does your identity as a child of God mean to you?

3. The Pleasure and Privilege of the New Relationship to God: verses 6-11

- a. Because you are his sons! This presupposes the fact that has been described in the letter of Galatians. You have trusted in Jesus as the redemption from the curse of the Law and from the Law itself; as a result you have been adopted by God and are His child due to His Divine plan and power to save!
- i. You Have His Spirit: Because you belong to God in Jesus, you have been granted His Spirit! 2 Corinthians 5:5, Spirit guarantees our eventual bodily transformation in the eternal state! 2 Corinthians 1:22, Spirit is the mark of God's ownership of our lives. Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:20, sealed for the day of redemption.
 - ii. Crying "abba" Father in your hearts! The Holy Spirit cries out within you, to God, as "daddy." He works in you to cause you to love the one who loved you, gave Himself for you, and now lives in you! Philippians 2:13. Your desire for God is a response to God's desire for you and His work in your life. Your heart is changed by the Holy Spirit! As Paul wrote in [Romans 8:16](#): *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*
 - iii. Boice points out, "The early church fathers - Chrysostom, Theodor of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret of Cyprus, who came from Antioch (where Aramaic was spoken and who probably had Aramaic-speaking nurses in their childhood) - unanimously testify that *Abba* was the address of a small child to his father."
 - iv. "*Abba* is an Aramaic affectionate diminutive for 'father' used in the intimacy of the family circle; it passed without change into the vocabulary of Greek-speaking Christians" (Fung)
 - v. We have access to the same intimacy with God the Father that God the Son, Jesus Christ had. Jesus addressed God the Father as "Daddy" when He prayed, *Abba, Father* as recorded in [Mark 14:36](#).
- b. The Slavery Situation Has ended!
- i. Not a slave but a child!
 - ii. Since a child then an heir!
 - iii. Don't go back to the weak things that enslaved you in your past life!
 - iv. Going back would be a waste of God's work and the work of the ministry!

"One of the tragedies of legalism is that it gives the appearance of spiritual maturity when, in reality, it leads the believer back into a 'second childhood' of Christian experience." (Wiersbe)

- What prevent you from feeling close and intimate to God?
- Can this intimate picture of God do damage to how we see and respond to God's authority in our lives?
- How do you think most people view themselves in relation to God, as a slave or a son/daughter? Why?

Additional Study:

If time allows, read and reflect together on **Romans 8:14-27**. Identify the many works of the Holy Spirit in these verses. Emphasize that this passage should be one of the first resources for understanding the true work of the Holy Spirit. He helps us know our new identity, shun sin, pray and find the will of God! Thank God for His work in your life through His Holy Spirit.

Apply:

- Thank God for His Spirit of adoption!
- Commit to know Him as a living son to your heavenly Father.
- Ask for Him to show you any legalism and beggarly ideas that are creeping into your life.

For additional study helps go to this link at blueletterbible.org.

http://www.blbclassic.org/commentaries/comm_view.cfm?AuthorID=2&contentID=20173&commInfo=31&topic=Galatians&ar=Gal_4_1