

## Freedom as an Heir

I will repeat what has been said all afternoon," said Elayne, "that we could never repay you, Vera, for all the wonderful work you've done with women who are incarcerated."

"Vera has been driving two hours each way once a week to teach a Bible study class," continued Elayne. "She's done that for the past three years without any complaints."

Next up was 20-year-old Marlee who spoke of a Black woman more than half her age who mentored her, nurtured her, and showed her the love of Christ.

"Vera, we know we are making you uncomfortable during your birthday celebration," said Pastor Brown, "because you like to praise others. So, hold onto your seat, because we've got a big surprise for you."

Elayne came to the table with a beautifully wrapped, small box.

"Open it sister," said Pastor Brown.

Inside the box were keys and a key fob. Vera's mouth fell open.

"They're keys to a 2019 Kia Rio," said Pastor Brown. "We know your car died, and you've been sad that you haven't been able to get to the prison to help the women there."

"But this is just too generous," Vera said.

"No," countered Pastor Brown. "It's just a small taste of the inheritance you have as a child of God."

**1.** *What are the differences between the things of God in contrast to the things of the world?*

**2.** *Why do we get mired in the things of the world?*

**3.** *What does it mean to you to be an adopted child of God?*

## The Intent of the Law

*Galatians 3:23-29, KJV*

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

*Galatians 3:23-29, NIV*

<sup>23</sup>Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed. <sup>24</sup>So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup>Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

<sup>26</sup>So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, <sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

In Galatians 3:19-22, Paul taught that the law was a temporary provision by which God prepared people for Jesus' coming. God used the law to bring about the knowledge of sin and to show humanity exists under its curse. That arrangement remained in effect until the coming of Jesus.

In the Roman world, wealthy families often had a servant, known as a "guardian" (vs. 24; "schoolmaster," KJV), who supervised the conduct of the family's sons. Paul compared the law to this servant. In a way, the law held us in its protective "custody" (vs. 23). The law was also like a guard who kept us locked up as prisoners until

the time when we would believe in the Redeemer. Like the “guardians,” the law disciplined and guided us by revealing and condemning sin until Jesus came (vs. 24).

Now that the Father has established faith in His Son as the way to be declared righteous, we no longer need the law as our custodian. Just as a child’s guardian is no longer needed when the child grows up and becomes an adult, so the law was superseded by the coming of the Savior. In light of this truth, Paul called the Galatians “children of God” (vs. 26). The apostle’s point is that the Father’s spiritual children reach adulthood, not by keeping the law, but by trusting in His Son.

Paul described salvation not only as becoming adults in God’s spiritual family, but also as being “baptized into Christ” and “clothed . . . with Christ” (vs. 27). Paul was referring to the believers’ close identification with and participation in Jesus’ death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5). Furthermore, believers are spiritually “clothed” with Christ—they took on His righteousness by faith.

Jesus’ coming broke down worldly divisions such as those based on distinctions of race, social-economic status, and gender (vs. 28). These three social distinctions were significant ones in His day. Prejudice existed between Jews and non-Jews over religious, political, and cultural issues. Tens of millions of people throughout the Roman Empire were enslaved by others. Women had limited legal rights and were often looked down upon by men. However, such distinctions have no bearing on who can become a follower of the Savior. All who have trusted in the Messiah are Abraham’s “seed” (vs. 29), his spiritual descendants and heirs to his promise.

**4.** *What was our existence like “under the law” (vs. 23)?*

**5.** *What made it possible for us to no longer need the law as our “guardian” (vs. 25)?*

**6.** *What sorts of distinctions were eliminated due to the Messiah’s arrival?*

## The Inheritance of Believers

*Galatians 4:1-7, KJV*

1 Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

*Galatians 4:1-7, NIV*

<sup>1</sup>What 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. <sup>2</sup>The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. <sup>3</sup>So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world.

<sup>4</sup>But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. <sup>6</sup>Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

<sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

To drive home his point concerning the status of the believer in Christ, Paul used the illustration of inheritance. If a father died, leaving behind a young son, a minor, as the heir of his father's estate, the property and assets belonged to the child, but he could not control it until he reached the age specified by the father in the trust. The child was "subject to guardians and trustees" (vs. 2), who were in complete control of the child.

As far as having freedom to act on his own, the child was "no different from a slave" (vs. 1). Paul compared the

child's bondage to our spiritual "slavery" (vs. 3) before coming to faith in Jesus. We were enslaved to the world's "elemental spiritual forces." Those "forces" might be the law, demons, or the superstitions of pagan religions. Regardless, Paul was describing a person's enslaved status before receiving the Gospel.

At the divinely appointed time, Jesus was "born of a woman" (vs. 4) and submitted Himself to the law. God the Son became a sinless human being so that He might identify with us. God sent His Son "to redeem" those who were under the law's bondage and to provide the basis by which God is able "to adopt" them as sons and daughters. Redemption means "to buy out of slavery." People were slaves either to the law, as Jews, or to the "basic principles of the world," as Gentiles. Christ paid the price of their redemption so they could be set free. Moreover, it is through Him that people have their adoption. His death on the Cross provided redemption for all those "under the law" (vs. 5) by being the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

Paul brought his earlier illustration to a climax by describing those who have received the Messiah as having received their full inheritance. This is more than just a legal maneuver in which repenting sinners are adopted into God's family as children. When we receive the "Spirit of his Son" (vs. 6), we share the eternal life of God in our daily experience.

This new relationship transforms how we pray. We approach the Father not as slaves who are cringing in terror, but rather as children of the King. "Abba, Father" is an address of love and intimacy reserved for children who are fully aware of their standing with their father.

**7.** *Before the coming of Christ, what was our existence comparable to?*

**8.** *For what purpose did the Father send His Son to earth?*

**9.** *What are the blessings we receive as God's children?*

## Our True Inheritance

Greer Garson was a major actress in the film industry during the 1940s. She received seven Academy Award nominations for Best Actress, winning an Oscar for her performance in the title role of the 1942 film *Mrs. Miniver*. She was married for nearly 40 years until the passing of her oil tycoon husband, from whom she inherited millions.

What is little known about her is that Greer Garson was a devout Christian, and by the time of her death at the age of 91, her vast fortune had dwindled considerably because of her charitable heart. She not only gave millions to the theatre, but she also gave to hospitals, to conservation, and to Christian agencies. What she donated to others reflected the great inheritance she had received from God.

Garson received fame for her great beauty, acclaim for her outstanding acting skills, and tremendous wealth from her devoted husband, and yet, she understood that her greatest blessings came from the Lord. Most of us will not be as fortunate as she was in terms of what she received from the world, but we can all appreciate the reality that we share equally in the inheritance we have in Christ Jesus.

We may not have the resources to give millions to Christian missions, but we can give from what we have. The poor widow gave two small copper coins worth only a few cents, yet what did Jesus say of her? He praised her, and she became a model of giving for all of us (see Mark 12:41-44). Moreover, her inheritance from the Lord is nothing less than what Greer Garson or any of us has received. Praise God that we have received an inheritance from Him that is eternal and priceless!

**10.** *Does it matter to God what station we have in this world? Explain your answer.*

**11.** *Why does God want us to share the inheritance we have from Him with others?*

**12.** *In what ways can you improve your attitude about what you have inherited from God?*

## Priceless and Precious

Just as Paul reminded the Galatian church of the rich inheritance God has lavished on them, his letter also reminds us of the same blessings we have as His adopted children. Salvation in Christ Jesus, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the fellowship within the church are among the many gifts with which God has blessed us. And they are all priceless and precious!

► Write “Thank You, Jesus!” here and then list some of the inheritances from God that you are privileged to have because of His great sacrifice for you on the Cross such things as treasure in heaven, a home for eternity with Him, and so forth.

### KEY VERSE

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

—Galatians 3:26, KJV

So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

—Galatians 3:26, NIV

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

#### Week of October 30 through November 5

(See *The Quiet Hour and Cross devotionals* on these passages.)

**Mon.** Acts 15:12-21—Welcoming God’s New People.

**Tue.** Psalm 37:27-40—The Lord Delivers.

**Wed.** Psalm 121—My Help Comes from the Lord.

**Thu.** 1 Corinthians 12:12-20—Many Parts, One Body.

**Fri.** Acts 17:22-34—God Is Near to Anyone.

**Sat.** Isaiah 56—Salvation for All People.

**Sun.** Acts 15:1-11—Saved through the Grace of Jesus.