

**An Invitation and Calling:
Learning to Live in the Grace of Christ
September 16 – November 11 2012**

**“By the Grace of Christ, I Can Live as an Adopted Child of God”
Study Helps: Week Five of Nine
Galatians 4:1-31, Oct 14 2012**

Focus for Week Five

Over the last weeks, we have been looking carefully at the invitation and calling that God extends to all people to “live in the grace of Christ.” We have looked inside this invitation through the letter that Paul, a follower of Jesus, wrote to a group of Christians that had experienced this grace but were becoming confused and “bewitched” by those opposed to this grace.

This morning, we consider the cosmic process that God uses to adopt those he created to become his children through Jesus. If you belong to Jesus, you know of this adoption. If you are new to the Christian faith, we hope you will understand this adoption well enough to receive this adoption for yourself.

We also consider what Paul says in Galatians 4 about two dangers facing those who want to live in this grace as well as two stories of adoption that might help us live in this grace of Christ.

Summary of “Time of Reflection” and Message

1. Time of Reflection

- You have likely heard people tell stories of the process by which they adopted a boy or girl or were adopted themselves. Some of you can share this story firsthand as one who has adopted or been adopted. Sometimes, the process was simple; often, the process is very complicated.
- As we continue to look inside the invitation and calling that God extends to all those who he created to “live in the grace of Christ,” we looked at the cosmic redemptive process by which God must adopt a person if they are to live in this grace of Christ.
- **In Galatians 4:4-7, Paul outlines the process God uses to adopt people to enter his grace** so they may live in this grace of Christ.
 - a. **“But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman,”** - Jesus, the Son of God for all eternity, came in HISTORY, sent by his Father, born as a human.
 - b. **“born under the law,”** – Jesus was born under God’s requirement that the law God had written on human hearts and given to people to be obeyed perfectly.

- c. **“to redeem those under the law,”** – He fulfilled the law perfectly, took on himself the curse God places on people for failing to obey God’s law to love God and love one’s neighbour perfectly, and then rescued those under God’s curse by giving himself for their sins and placing them into his grace.
- d. **“ that we might receive adoption to sonship.”** – God identifies those who believe in this historic work of Jesus as his children, no longer slaves to their sin or illusions of their own righteousness; rather, they are God’s child.
- e. **“Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’”** – One of the works of the Holy Spirit in the heart of his child is to grow that person’s understanding of God as their Father and attentiveness to the Spirit’s voice calling out, “Abba Father” - - “My dear father.”
- f. **“So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.”** - As God’s child, God makes us heir, an inheritor, of God’s promise of life lived in the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

2. Summary of Message

- **Two Dangers facing those who want to live in the grace of Christ**
 - a. **Danger One: Turn back to the slavery we left (or continue in the slavery we are in) (4:1-3, 8-11)**
 - 1) Two types of slavery
 - a) Continue to live as if we were underage heirs (4:1-3; see also 3:23-25)
 - b) Live as slaves to those “gods” we empower (4:8) and let them have control over us (4:8)
 - 2) Indications that we are turning back to slavery
 - a) Forget what we know of God and the work of Christ (4:9a)
 - b) Forget that we are known by God, who knows also our sin (4:9a)
 - c) Turn back to those “weak and miserable forces” (4:9b)¹
 - b. **Danger Two: Turn against/Turn away from those servants seeking to form you in the grace of Christ (4:12 – 20)**
 - 1) God leads such servants into our lives: these can be individuals or larger communities of grace
 - 2) Characteristics of such servants
 - a) They enter into relationship with us (4:12-14a)
 - b) They put great effort into us (4:11)
 - c) They share life in Christ with us, with their weaknesses (4:14b-15)
 - d) They speak and share the gospel of Christ with us (4:16)
 - e) They remember us even when away from us (4:18c)

¹ The NIV 2011 Study Bible references Colossians 2:9 which says about “weak and miserable forces” that these refer to “false, worldly, elementary teachings.” In other words, one of the dangers those seeking to live in the grace of Christ can face is to become enslaved again to cultural practices, religious activities, acts of righteousness according to God’s law, or even false teachings.

- f) They long to form us in the grace of Christ (4:19)
- g) They notice changes in our walk with Jesus and care (4:20)
- 3) People opposed to this gospel seek to “win us over” (4:17-18)
 - a) Can alienate us from the gospel
 - b) Are often zealous in their desire to “win us over”
 - c) Their purpose is “not good” (4:17-18)
 - d) Put pressure on us to follow certain practices rather than emphasizing a relationship with Jesus (4:10)

- **Two Stories of adoption that might help us live in the grace of Christ**

- a. **Story One: A Figurative (i.e. Symbolic) Story of Two Sons (4:21-31)**

- 1) Abraham had two sons: one was by a slave woman, one a free woman
- 2) The two women represent two covenants (i.e. agreements/contracts) or ways of approaching life and God
 - a) The Covenant of Slavery: Viewing life and God from a slave’s perspective
Note: this “weak and miserable” approach to God and life was exemplified when Abraham and Sarah failed to trust God to fulfill his promise and tried to achieve God’s promised outcomes through their own efforts (see Genesis 15; 16:1-16; 21:1-21)
 - b) The Covenant of Promise: Viewing life and God from the perspective of a child of God’s promised seed, Jesus, and the promised Holy Spirit
Note: Abraham and Sarah also had to learn to live in this grace of Christ (see Genesis 18:1-15; 22:1-18).
- 3) Those who belong to Jesus, whether Jews or Gentiles, are adopted children of God’s promise
- 4) A conflict exists between those two ways of living and approaches to God
- 5) Conclusion: “Stand firm; do not let yourself be put under the yoke of slavery” (5:1); in other words, live by faith in Christ rather than by your own efforts to achieve God’s favour.

- b. **Story Two: Jesus, the Promise Fulfilled**

- 1) Paul has emphasized that Jesus is the seed promised to Abraham; Jesus is the promise fulfilled (3:7-9; 3:16).
- 2) In Galatians 4:27, Paul quotes Isaiah 54:1; this is in the middle of an expanded section that speaks of Jesus, the promised seed (see Isaiah 53:1-54:8).
- 3) Through this story, we see what it cost Jesus to give his life for our sin that those who come to him by faith might receive adoption into God’s family.

For Further Study

1. Meditate on Galatians 4:4-7 and consider the process of adoption God requires of all who would live in the grace of Christ.

2. What are ways you encounter the two dangers Paul mentions in Galatians 4?
3. What are ways the Holy Spirit is making you attentive to the ways you can fall back into the slavery described by Paul in Galatians 4:9?
4. Read the story of Abraham and Sarah in the Genesis passages noted in the message summary above and consider ways God grew them in faith such that they might live in the grace of his promised Seed, Christ, rather than the efforts of their own flesh.
5. Print off the manuscript of Isaiah 53:1 – 54:8, provided below, and observe the many details by which the work of Christ is described. How does this make you think of the adoption provided by Christ differently?
6. Take Away Question: “Do I still live as a slave to “weak and miserable forces” or as an adopted, loved child of God through Christ?”

* Prepared by Tim Berends

***See manuscript of Isaiah 53:1 – 54:8 (NIV 2011) below**

Manuscript of Isaiah 53:1 – 54:8 (NIV 2011)**Isaiah 53**

Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

² He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

³ He was despised and rejected by mankind,
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their faces
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

⁴ Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering,
yet we considered him punished by God,
stricken by him, and afflicted.

⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
and by his wounds we are healed.

⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way;
and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

⁸ By oppression and judgment he was taken away.
Yet who of his generation protested?
For he was cut off from the land of the living;
for the transgression of my people he was punished.

⁹ He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death,
though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

¹⁰ Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days,
and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.

¹¹ After he has suffered,
he will see the light of life and be satisfied;

by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many,
and he will bear their iniquities.

¹²Therefore I will give him a portion among the great,
and he will divide the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto death,
and was numbered with the transgressors.
For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaiah 54

“Sing, barren woman, you who never bore a child;
burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor;
because more are the children of the desolate woman
than of her who has a husband,” says the LORD.

²“Enlarge the place of your tent,
stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back;
lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.
³For you will spread out to the right and to the left;
your descendants will dispossess nations
and settle in their desolate cities.

⁴“Do not be afraid; you will not be put to shame.
Do not fear disgrace; you will not be humiliated.
You will forget the shame of your youth
and remember no more the reproach of your widowhood.
⁵For your Maker is your husband—
the LORD Almighty is his name—
the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer;
he is called the God of all the earth.

⁶The LORD will call you back
as if you were a wife deserted and distressed in spirit—
a wife who married young,
only to be rejected,” says your God.

⁷“For a brief moment I abandoned you,
but with deep compassion I will bring you back.

⁸In a surge of anger
I hid my face from you for a moment,
but with everlasting kindness
I will have compassion on you,”
says the LORD your Redeemer.