

## *Galatians: Freedom In Christ*

Week 7: Children of God (Gal 3:26 – 4:7)

### Look Around

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Have you ever felt like an outsider at church? What made you feel that way?

It is so easy to dismiss people from God's family based on our ideas about who belongs and who doesn't. Regardless of our idea about who belongs and who doesn't, God welcomes all who put their faith in Christ into the family of God. Whether we know it or not, chaining people to our ideas of conformity robs them of the freedom they have in Christ and alienates them from the family Christ died for them to have.

### Look at the Text – Key Concepts

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- **Justified** – Justification is a declaration from God that you are innocent of sin. Instead, you are in right standing (righteous) before Him. God, the judge, grants you freedom instead of condemnation. Justification is God's declaration about the status of the relationship between God and an individual, not any change within the individual. In other words, justification doesn't make anyone holy; it simply declares us not guilty before God and, therefore, treated as holy.
  
- **Righteousness** – righteousness embodies the character, behavior, and status appropriate for the covenant relationship between God and humanity. God demonstrates righteousness by being faithful to his promises. Humanity expresses righteousness in and through loyal obedience to God's commands.

- **The Law** – The Mosaic Law refers to the laws God gave Moses on Mount Sinai after releasing the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. They include the Ten Commandments, ordinances for living in society, and regulations for worship (requirements for priests, sacrifices, feasts, and the temple). The Bible gives at least four reasons God gave the Mosaic Law to His people: for their own good, to reveal Himself to them, to set them apart in order to reveal Himself to others, and to reveal humanity's need for a savior.
- **The Spirit** – God sent his spirit, the Holy Spirit, to transform the character of God's people and to empower them to carry out God's will and purpose.

## Look at the Text – Context

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In this section of the letter, Paul repeats a complex argument that affirms that gentiles are indeed legitimate heirs to the promises of God through Abraham. Paul goes a step further to tear down all barriers that excludes anyone from being accepted into the family of God based on adherence to specific practices. Paul teaches that to keep people bound to specific practices (religious or pagan) is to keep them locked away under the bondage of an era gone by that provides no salvation. Though the rival teacher felt they were honoring God by continuing to follow The Law, Paul argues that it was really the work of dark and evil forces that keeps the Galatians chasing after useless rituals after they have been set free by Christ. A plan designed to keep them from realizing that we are indeed children of God.

## Look at the Text – Observation & Interpretation

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### Galatians 3:26 – 4:7

#### Observation

- What declares someone to be a child of God?

- How is the message in Gal 4:1-5 similar to the message in Gal 3:23-25?
  
- What does the coming of Christ do for those under the law?

### **Interpretation**

- Why is Paul removing distinctions between Jews and Gentile, male and female, slave and free?
  
- What is the significance of Christ being "born of a woman, born under the law"?
  
- Why do you suppose our hearts cry out "Abba, Father" once we have been adopted into the family of God and receive the Spirit?

### **Look At God**

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- God accepts people from all walks of life into his family. Take a moment to get an image of the diversity of people in God's family. How would you describe God's capacity to love such a diverse group of people?

- In his grace, God freed us from a life of separation from him by sending Christ to redeem us from the bondage and condemnation of sin. Why do you think it is so important to God that all creation be redeemed from sin and fully accepted into relationship with him forever?
  
- Write a prayer to express your gratitude to God for accepting you into such a diverse family.

## Look At Me

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- Have you ever felt as though you were not viewed as a child of God by another? How did that make you feel? What was your response?
  
- When are you most likely to dismiss someone else's status as a child of God and fail to look at them with the same love God has for all God's children?
  
- We often isolate ourselves from people who don't look, think, or act like us. We see this most clearly when we look across the many denominations of our churches. How might God bless us if we opened ourselves up to accept the gift of diversity in God's creation?

- As an expression of pure joy, verse 4:6 says the Spirit of God cries out, 'Abba, Father' when sent into our hearts. What joy do you have in realizing that God's Spirit that dwells in you? How is God calling you to express that joy with your brothers and sisters in Christ?