

Small Group Guide: Galatians 4 - Heirs Through Christ

Key Takeaways

1. From Slavery to Sonship

- Before Christ, we lived under bondage to the "elements of the world" - the elementary principles of cause and effect, karma, or trying to earn God's favor
- At the appointed time of the Father, Jesus came to redeem us and adopt us as heirs
- We are no longer slaves but sons and daughters with full inheritance rights

2. The Two Covenants

- The covenant of law (represented by Hagar and Mount Sinai) leads to bondage
- The covenant of grace (represented by Sarah and the heavenly Jerusalem) leads to freedom
- These two cannot coexist - we must choose grace over works

3. The Danger of Turning Back

- The Galatians were being tempted to return to legalism after experiencing freedom in Christ
- We face similar temptations to return to familiar patterns of trying to earn God's acceptance
- True Christian maturity means staying in the freedom Christ purchased for us

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. **What does Paul mean when he says we were "under guardians and stewards" until the appointed time? (v. 2)**
 - How does this relate to the Roman custom of adoption Paul references?
2. **Why does Paul emphasize that Jesus was "born of a woman, born under the law"? (v. 4)**
 - What was necessary about Jesus being born under the law to redeem us?
3. **What is the significance of calling God "Abba, Father"? (v. 6)**

- How does the Holy Spirit enable us to have this intimate relationship with God?

Personal Reflection

- 4. Paul asks the Galatians, "How is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements?" (v. 9)**
 - What "weak and beggarly elements" are you tempted to return to in your own life?
 - What makes us want to go back to old patterns of trying to earn God's favor?
- 5. The sermon mentioned that "it's really easy to look back towards some place of comfort or some place of familiarity."**
 - When have you been tempted to return to something familiar rather than trust God with the unknown?
 - What fears or frustrations make you want to take control rather than rest in God's grace?
- 6. Paul says he's afraid he "labored for you in vain" (v. 11). Have you ever felt like you were slipping backward spiritually?**
 - What helped you get back on track?

Application

- 7. The sermon contrasted living under law versus living under grace:**
 - **Under law:** Focus on me and my performance
 - **Under grace:** Focus on Jesus and His performance
- 8. Which mindset do you find yourself operating in more often? Give specific examples.**
- 9. Paul urges the Galatians to "become like me, for I became like you" (v. 12).**
 - How can we follow Paul's example of following Christ without sounding prideful?
 - Who in your life could you invite to "follow you as you follow Christ"?
- 10. The sermon emphasized that we are heirs who inherit "God himself."**
 - How should this truth change the way we live day-to-day?

- What practical difference does it make to know you're an heir rather than a slave?

Going Deeper

10. Paul uses the allegory of Hagar and Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac, to contrast two ways of living.

- What does it mean practically to "cast out the bondwoman" in our lives today?
- Are there areas where you're trying to "help God" like Abraham and Sarah did with Hagar?

11. The sermon mentioned that "law and grace cannot live together as principles for our Christian life."

- Do you agree or disagree? Why?
- How do we use God's law as a "guide" without falling into legalism?

12. Paul warns about false teachers who "zealously court you, but for no good" (v. 17).

- How can we discern between genuine Christian teaching and teaching that looks good but leads to bondage?
- What are some red flags to watch for?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose one of the following to practice this week:

Option 1: Identify Your Legalism

- Make a list of ways you try to earn God's favor or approval
- For each item, write out the truth of what God's grace says instead
- Pray daily, thanking God that you are accepted based on Christ's performance, not yours

Option 2: Live as an Heir

- Each morning this week, pray "Abba, Father" and thank God for adopting you
- Identify one decision you need to make this week and ask: "Am I making this as a slave or as a son/daughter?"
- Journal about what changes when you approach life as an heir rather than a slave

Option 3: Help Someone Else Find Freedom

- Think of someone who seems to be struggling with legalism or trying to earn God's love
- Share your own story of discovering grace with them
- Pray with them about living in freedom

Memory Verse

Galatians 4:6-7 *"And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."*

Closing Thought

"We are truly free because of Jesus Christ and what He did for us. You can't earn it. We are heirs to God Himself. It doesn't get any better than that. There ain't nothing in this world that Satan himself or anybody else could ever offer you that would even come close."