

Week 10: "A New Position in Christ"

Memory Verse

But then the right time came, God sent his Son. A woman gave birth to him. He was born under the authority of the law. He came to set free those who were under the law. He wanted us to be adopted as children with all the rights children have. Because you are his children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. He is the Holy Spirit. By his power we call God "Abba." "Abba" means Father.

So you aren't slaves any longer. You are God's children. Because you are his children, he gives you what he promised to give his people. *Galatians 4:4-7 NIRV*

Day One

Sunday, December 22, 2002

"A New Relationship"

Read: Galatians 4: 1-7 (p. 1348) and Commentary: (p. 1349)

Reflect: Remember the times when you were transitioning from childhood into adulthood? It was hard to "act like an adult" when you often did not feel like one. What did you have to "tell yourself" in such situations? How did you gradually begin to act like an adult? What does this experience have to do with the passage from Galatians?

Dig: What are our "full rights as sons (daughters)"? Look up these passages as cross-references and see if you can piece more of the picture together. In other words, after each scripture, write out what you might consider "rights" or privileges God gives us because we are his children:

Romans 8:23-27 (pg. 1290):

John 15:15-16 (pg. 1222):

I John 4:4-6 (pg. 1468):

Apply: Our lesson today states "as believers we are not trying to become children of God; we already are children of God-becoming like Christ." Compose a prayer based on the fact that you are already a child of God becoming more like Christ.

How could you act today in such a way that you prove that you are one of God's children? Children trust their fathers. Children happily obey their fathers. How can you quit acting like a slave to your desires, feelings and drives and start acting on the truth that sets you free: you are a child of God!

Prayer: Since today we read about calling God Abba, Father, why don't you try writing out a prayer to God and begin it with "Dear Abba" or "Dear Daddy" and see what God does to help reveal to you that he really is your father.

Day Two
Monday, December 23, 2002
"A Right Standing"

Read: Read Jeremiah 52:31-34 (pg. 894) and "Freedom in Christ" devotional (pg. 893)

Reflect: When in your life were you declared to be special and felt that you did not deserve it? For example, I was told by my sixth grade teacher that I was "bright and had the gift of curiosity." It seemed "out of the blue" to me and changed the whole way I thought of myself in her classroom. Have you had a similar experience? Can it give you insight into how God redefines us?

How was Jehoiachin's experience a reflection of this "out of the blue" experience?

Dig: Chapter 52:9-11 may be one of the most gruesome passages in the whole Bible. The Babylonians were cruel and would force someone to witness a horrible sight and then put out their eyes so that they would have to live with that final memory. In the midst of this horror, God arranges the book of Jeremiah to close with mercy and grace. The darkest time of the night is said to be just before dawn. How is this true in the book of Jeremiah, in the life of Christ, in the book of Romans (look up Romans 3:23 (pg. 1283), 6:23 (pg. 1287), 7:21-25 (pg. 1288)). How is this true in your own life?

Apply: Our ancestors in the faith would often want to be very persistent and thorough in their description of the fallen and desperate condition of the human heart and society. They felt that this was a more biblical approach to right understanding of ourselves and helped us to more completely embrace our new relationship in Jesus Christ. Take some time right now to list the way the Bible defines you apart from Christ (you can take your cue from the "Post-Fall Humanity" description on page 893 of your "Freedom" Bible). Next, say a prayer thanking God for giving you a "Jehoiachin experience" or an "out of the blue" new understanding of who you are in Christ. Finally, make a mental or written list

of how God is treating you with specific mercies.

Day Three
Tuesday, December 24, 2002
"Peace With God "

Read: Judges 6:1-24 (pg. 268) and Commentary (pg. 269)

Reflect: In re-reading Gideon's conversation with God (or God's angel) notice the character of the conversation. Does it sound like talks you have had with God? What do you think of God's answer (vs. 14) to Gideon's question regarding God's seeming absence?

Dig: What does this encounter with God have in common with some others in the Bible? Take a look at Exodus 3 (p. 64) and Luke 1:26-38 (p. 1153). List some common experiences that Moses and Mary had with Gideon.

Apply: Write out a conversation with God today. As Gideon did, talk with God about some area of conflict in your life and let God speak his peace to you. Take the phrase "The LORD is Peace" and write it across the prayer. Then take this phrase with you all day as you face your enemies and fears and anxieties.

Day Four
Wednesday, December 25, 2002
"Access to God"

Read: Hebrews 10:19-25 and Commentary on p. 1432

Reflect: Most people who have pagers or cell phones will give their number out to their children or close friends. One company has made millions selling phones with "two-way" for a family or circle of friends. In fact, one way to find out how important you are to a person is to see if you are on their "speed-dialer" on in their phone memory system. We are important to God. We have "two-way" with Him. Having this kind of access to God means something. What does it mean for you? Are you taking advantage of this feature of our relationship to Him?

Dig: The main idea of this text is that we have a "new and living way" to God. There are four conclusions that are drawn from that main idea, each conclusion begins with the words "let us." What are those four conclusions? Compare this direction for what a small group (or church) ought to do with the description of the early church from Acts 2:42-47. How do they compare and contrast? This text

begins with a "therefore" which both points back to what came previously and also points ahead to what is coming. If you want to dig a bit more, summarize the author's argument (and see if you can figure out why he included a section of Psalm 40 and then of Jeremiah 31) in the first 18 verses of chapter 10. Then figure out why he then made the "applications" with the four "let us" phrases.

Apply: We live in the most individualized culture the world has ever known. How do the instruction of this verse challenge that lifestyle? What commitments is God urging on you through the study of this text? Or, to put it another way, how is God's easy access for you to himself connected with your relationship to other people?

Prayer: Why not take each of the four "let us" phrases and use it as a guide for your prayer today?

Day Five
Thursday, December 26, 2002
"The Witness of the Holy Spirit"

Read: Joel 2:28-32 (p. 996) and Commentary (p. 997)

Reflect: Our bodies are called "a temple of the Holy Spirit" (I Cor. 6:19). How often does that truth come home to you? How do you feel about your body knowing that it is considered to be a temple of the Holy Spirit?

Dig: Does every Christian have the Holy Spirit or can you be a believer and not have the Holy Spirit in you? (see Romans 8:9, p. 1290). According to Romans 8:16, what bondage are we released from as we come to know the Spirit's witness that we are children of God? And what do we need to experience in order to be authentic children of God? (hint, see verse 17). What happens when we believe that we are children of God (by the Spirit's testimony) and God pours out his Spirit on us? (see verse 28) Does the pastors' vision for a gift-based church and more than 500 people coming to hear about Christ have anything to do with this verse? Why or why not?

Apply: Ask God to give you a sign today of that inner witness that you are a child of God. Compose a prayer to God addressing him as "Abba" or "daddy."