

The Context Bible

Life Group Lesson 30

July 21- 27, 2014

Acts 14:1 – 14:28

Introduction to the Context Bible

Have you ever wished the Bible was easier to read through like an ordinary book – cover to cover? Because the Bible is a collection of 66 books, it makes reading like an ordinary book quite difficult. Compounding this difficulty is the fact that the later writers of the New Testament were often quoting or referencing passages in the Old Testament. In fact, much of the New Testament makes better sense only if one also considers the Old Testament passages that place the text into its scriptural context.

You are reading a running commentary to The Context Bible. This arrangement of Scripture seeks to overcome some of these difficulties. Using a core reading of John's gospel, the book of Acts, and the Revelation of John, the Context Bible arranges all the rest of Scripture into a contextual framework that supports the core reading. It is broken out into daily readings so that this program allows one to read the entire Bible in a year, but in a contextual format.

Here is the running commentary for week thirty, along with the readings for week thirty-one appended. Join in. It's never too late to read the Bible in context!

Week Thirty Readings

<p>7/21 Paul to the Galatians By Faith, not Works Gal 3:1-14</p> <p>Ezek 20 Rom 1:1-15 Rom 2:1</p>	<p>7/23 Paul to the Galatians By Faith, not Works – Cont'd Gal 3:1-14</p> <p>Amos 1:1-3:6, 9-15 Jer 11</p> <p>7/24 Paul to the Galatians By Faith, not Works – Cont'd Gal 3:1-14</p> <p>Rom 3:1-18 Ps 53 Prov 20:9 Isa 59 Rom 3:19-31</p>	<p>7/25 Paul to the Galatians Law and Promise Gal 3:15-29</p> <p>Lev 14:33-57 Lev 22:17-33 Num 35 Dt 4:41-43 Heb 10:1-18</p>	<p>7/26 Paul to the Galatians Sons and Heirs Gal 4:1-31</p> <p>Rom 6 Prov 24:15-16 Rom 7 Ps 127 Isa 54:1-10</p> <p>7/27 OFF</p>
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READING PURPOSE: This week’s core reading continues to be from the early missionary efforts of Paul and Barnabas. As they missionized the towns of Galatia, Paul followed up soon with his letter to those churches we call “Galatians.”

We are using Galatians along with some supplemental passages from Romans and other New and Old Testament sections to more fully flesh out the context of Paul’s missionary activities. For Paul, the work didn’t end with his time in the towns. He continued to care for and nurture the Christian communities he helped form.

The context readings give insight into the core message Paul preached as well as the way that message was misunderstood in the early church. Paul writes to clarify misunderstandings and set aright those who were distorting his core message.

Paul’s Missionary Work (Acts 14:1-14:28)

We know from secular sources that the area Paul evangelized in the first missionary journey was considered at the time, Galatia. This is a fact lost to the church for about 1700 years! Over a century after Paul wrote, Galatia became the term for only the northern Galatian province, an area Paul did NOT evangelize. For centuries, scholars thought of Galatia as this northern province, influencing their thought up until Sir William Ramsay did serious archaeology in the Galatian region in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Sir Ramsey was able to show that at the actual time that Paul wrote, the area that Luke describes as the first missionary journey was a part of Galatia.¹ For Paul to write to those churches of his first trip, it was proper and even expected that he would term them “the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2). Once Ramsay made his discoveries, the dominoes began to fall into place in support of the theory that Paul wrote to Galatians in the very churches about which we have read in the core Acts reading.

The Message

To properly understand Paul’s message to the Galatians, we need to consider the reason Paul wrote. Scholars use the word “occasion” to refer to the reason (or reasons) behind an epistle such as Galatians. We might consider our reading of the letter a bit like listening to one side of a telephone conversation. We cannot hear what the other person is saying, nor can we see the circumstances of the other person. But, we can gather a bit of information about the circumstances and conversation simply by listening to the one we can hear.

¹ See W. M. Ramsay’s various works including *The Cities of St. Paul* (London 1907); *Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London, 1890); *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (London 1920); *Cities and Bishoprics of Phrygia* (Oxford 1895).

Similarly, we discern the “occasion” of Galatians by reading what Paul writes. One might fairly ask why the “occasion” is important? The answer lies in our need to properly understand what Paul wrote. Orthodoxy teaches that the Holy Spirit worked through Paul and his writing to give the church guidance through specific problems and issues of the time. As we put those writings into their occasion, we are putting them into their historical context. That is the important first step before figuring out what God would want those scriptures to say to us in our historical context. For this reason, we examine the occasion. As we do so, we can tell that the churches were faced with certain problems and we can reconstruct fairly well what had happened since Paul left the churches.

As we try to determine the occasion, we do well to consider several verses:

- “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and turning to a different gospel” (Gal. 1:6).
- “There are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7).
- “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified” (Gal. 3:1).
- “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:3).
- “Now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?” (Gal. 4:9).
- “Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law?” (Gal. 4:21).
- “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).
- “Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you” (Gal. 5:2).
- “You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4).
- “You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?” (Gal. 5:7).

Although these verses give us only one side of the conversation, from them we get a good indication of why Paul wrote. Since Paul had evangelized the churches, some others had come in with a different teaching. This was a doctrine that Paul considered a distortion of the true gospel. Rather than reinforce faith in Christ, this teaching sought to enforce works of the flesh. Paul saw this as enslavement. It removed the purpose and role of Jesus the crucified Savior. It removed truth. It was as if someone were tampering with the perfect recipe, but so much more serious! This was not some dinner

recipe; this was God's eternal plan for the church!

No doubt because Paul is going to spend a great deal of this letter challenging, and even condemning, the teaching of some who came into the churches after Paul and Barnabas left, Paul begins his letter by setting up his own credentials and authority. Paul is "an apostle...through Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Gal. 1:1). Paul does not write on his own, but writes with the support of "all the brothers with" him (Gal. 1:2).

Paul will explain in Galatians 1:11-24 that his gospel he taught the Galatians was one that Paul received "through a revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12). It was "not man's gospel" (Gal. 1:11). Paul did not receive it from the apostles in Jerusalem; in fact his trips there were very limited. That said, Paul does want the Galatians to know that Paul ultimately set the gospel he taught before the apostles. The apostles accepted it and did not urge Paul or his brothers to change what they were teaching. "On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised...they gave the right hand of fellowship" (Gal. 2:7, 9).

Paul was so fervent in his zeal and so clear in his conviction about the gospel that Paul even confronted Peter, telling the Galatians, "I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned...and the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him" (Gal. 2:11, 13).

With great conviction and with a showing of godly authority, Paul set out to defend the gospel to the Galatians and to attack head-on the teachings and people in opposition. Paul was not going to let anyone distort the gospel! Early in the letter, Paul says that anyone who preaches a contrary gospel, even if it were an angel from heaven, should be "accursed." Paul emphasizes his point by repeating it, "I say again: if anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8-9).

In our context readings on these sections, we have added several proverbs that hold out the importance of man living God's plans, speaking words that honor God's desires rather than man's (Prov. 16:1-3).

Paul explained his gospel in very simple yet meaningful terms, "a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 2:16). "Faith" to Paul does not mean a mere mental assent. Faith (*πιστεύω* or *pisteuo* in the Greek) means believing and trusting. It implies obedience, hope, and faithfulness.² Paul is fervent on this point and repeats it over and over throughout the letter. Paul will say it in a myriad of ways. Consider:

² See Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 6 at 208.

- “By works of the law no one will be justified” (Gal. 2:16).
- “Through the law I died to the law” (Gal. 2:19).
- “I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for nothing” (Gal. 2:21).
- “Did you receive the Spirit by works of law or by hearing with faith?” (Gal. 3:2)
- “Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and who works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith” (Gal. 3:5).
- “It is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham...For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse” (Gal. 3:7, 10).
- “No one is justified before God by the law, for ‘The righteous shall live by faith’” (Gal. 3:11).
- “You who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace” (Gal. 5:4).

Do we see a pattern? Paul’s concern is so great that he goes over and over his point.

While Paul continues to repeat this core understanding of salvation, he also answers several questions that might be arising in the minds of the Galatians. For example, the Galatians might have wondered whether their refusal to follow Jewish ceremonial laws like circumcision makes Christ a minister or servant of sin (Gal. 2:15-18).³ In the words of the New International Version, “does that mean that Christ promotes sin?” Paul is confronting an argument that while the uncircumcised Gentile is a sinner, once that Gentile becomes a Christian, should the person then receive circumcision and begin to honor the law? The argument says if the Gentile does not start following the law, it leaves Jesus as a minister or promoter of sins and sinners? Paul explains that nothing could be further from the truth.

Paul shows that no one is ever “sin free” under the law. The solution to the law’s bondage is death. Paul says, “I have been crucified with Christ.” No, “it is no longer” Paul that lives, “but Christ who lives” in Paul. Paul’s earthly life is lived “by faith in the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20). Paul is explaining that Jesus is not the minister of sin, but the new life of the redeemed! If the law could be followed by anyone, Jew or Gentile, such that a person was no longer a “sinner,” then “Christ died for no purpose” (Gal. 2:21).

We have inserted into the Galatians readings some additional supplemental readings including Romans 9, where Paul went into excruciating detail about the pain he experienced over the failure of many Jews to live by faith rather than works. It seems to come more easily to the Gentiles, but the Jews seemed so wedded to the law, that

³ Some scholars see in this passage an argument that the false teachers had planted in the minds of the Galatians.

they could not see the mercy of God's grace bringing about a measure of righteousness no one can attain on their own.⁴

This same concern permeated Jesus' teaching as we see in the Luke 18 passages supplemented to the reading. The story of the tax collector and Pharisee is a classic illustration, contrasting one so cognizant of his own sin that couldn't look up to heaven to pray with the other who was proud of his own value compared to others.

So too, we read of the rich young ruler who thought he had truly followed all the commandments and was thus worthy of eternal life. Jesus explained to the young man that he was owned by his possessions, and was not fulfilling the commandment to love the Lord with all his heart, soul and mind, nor was he loving his neighbor as himself. This man was in no shape to earn his way into heaven, however righteous he thought himself.

There is no basis for man to be righteous before God. As the Isaiah 10 passage indicates, God's righteous judgment falls on those who boast and wrongly believe themselves right before him.

We have also inserted in this section Paul's classic teaching from Romans 8, about how there is no longer condemnation for those who live in Christ. There is a freedom from the divine law of sin bringing about death. The believer has God's actual Spirit indwelling her or him as part of the righteousness. It is something altogether different than the person trying to live before God based on individual merit.

We also read from Romans 10 and corresponding Old Testament passages from Numbers 28-29, that those attempting to live by the Law are instructed of the futility by the Law's own terms. The Law set out elaborate sacrifices because people are sinners. If people could live under the law, those sacrifices would also be unnecessary.

In Galatians, Paul uses several illustrations to make his point as he writes. On the issue of the law's ability to add anything to one's salvation, Paul goes to the Old Testament teaching on Abraham. Paul reminds the Galatians that the promise of blessing to Abraham was one that was given 430 years before the law was given on Sinai. Paul says that even with a human contract, one does not add or annul it once all have agreed to the terms. In this vein, Paul is asserting that the promise to Abraham could not have been altered 430 years later by a new addition of the law! (Gal. 3:15-19)

Paul's illustration of Abraham is especially powerful when we realize that the legal

⁴ We also inserted similar imagery Paul used about God as a potter found in Jeremiah 18 and Isaiah 45. It is a common theme that God makes use of vessels which he created.

burden being placed on the Galatians was likely placed by “good Jews” who saw it as appropriate for the children of Abraham.

After that illustration, Paul then addresses a logical question that might arise to the Galatians: If God did not give the law to effect eternal life, then why did he give it? Paul explains that the law met several of God’s purposes. First, the law was added “because of transgressions” (Gal. 3:19). The law stops some from sins that hurt and destroy society and the world around us. Further, the law showed sin for what it was, thereby also showing us Christ. Like a pedagogue⁵ (ESV “guardian”), the law led the lost to Christ.

But, the law lost its power as guardian once the Galatians came to Christ. “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 2:26-27).

Paul uses another metaphor to speak of the believer in Christ. The believer is “adopted as sons” into the family of God (Gal. 4:4-9). This language is echoed in the Romans passages supplementing the Galatian text:

Gal. 4:4-9 “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. Formerly when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?”

Rom. 8:15-17 “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

Rom. 8:22-23 “For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoptions as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”

Interesting that Paul denotes there is neither male nor female in Christ, and yet all are

⁵ A pedagogue in Greek culture was the tutor or trainer responsible for young children. The pedagogue taught the children their manners and the things necessary for going to school and becoming young civic-minded individuals.

adopted as sons. Is Paul simply reflecting some inherent sexism? Not at all. We better understand this by considering Roman law. We will pause here for a rather lengthy insert considering Roman law as a teaching point for what Paul is and is not saying:

ROMAN LAW INSERT⁶

In reading this section on Roman adoption law, we urge you to consider what aspects of Roman adoption seem important in understanding Paul's usage of this metaphor in describing our salvation experience and relationship with God. Before we flesh out this part of Roman law, we need to add two points of warning.

1. Paul was not a trained Roman lawyer. It is probably not fair to push Paul's understanding into the deep legal nuances of Roman Family Law. That said, much of our current knowledge of Roman Family Law on adoption indicates that the basics were such that Paul likely would have understood it to the degree that we present it here.⁷
2. As with any metaphor, there are applications that can be made and there are applications that are likely stretched beyond Paul's intended reach. This is especially true as we consider the process of adoption under Roman law. We will seek, then, to understand Roman law, but then look to Paul's actual writing and other scriptures to determine fair ways to put the metaphor to use.

In modern America, adoption generally occurs out of concern for the welfare of a child, adding a child that has no family to a family desiring a child. This was not the case in Paul's time. Roman law was sculpted around a need to adopt for other reasons. Adoption was the solution to a family in danger of dying out. Roman citizenship and society was built around the family unit. The family name, the family's estates, and the family's gods were all tied to the family unit. Failure to have offspring that continued the family line would extinguish these vital parts of the Roman way of life. Quite

⁶ Some might ask why we are jumping to Roman adoption law rather than considering Jewish or Greek adoption laws. There are several reasons. First, Hebrew adoption was incredibly rare (although there is a "sort of/maybe" reference to adoption in the OT as Israel is considered God's son). For adoption for Jews outside Palestine, Roman law would have trumped Jewish law. Roman law also trumped Hellenistic practices/law. Further, while the Hellenistic practice was unusual, convoluted, and inconsistent, the Roman practice was solidly written in stone, was incredibly common all over the empire, and was something that Paul would have understood as a Roman citizen (it was a right of the citizen).

⁷ At the time of Paul, Rome had a select group of legal specialists who would write on legal issues based upon hypothetical questions or cases. These legal writings were intended for legal scholars, not laypeople. Still these legal rules set out the basic guidelines for court practice as well as governing daily living. For a good discussion of the actual legal rules and cases, see Frier and McGinn, *A Casebook on Roman Family Law* (Oxford 2004).

often, then, the adopted person was not a child at all, but an adult.⁸ Similarly, the person being adopted typically was in a family already and was, in modern parlance, exchanging one family for another. Many times the adopted adult brought significant possessions, including slaves.

A word about the two types of Roman adoption: The Roman adoption could take place in two different ways. The Latin names for these two kinds of adoption are *adoptio* and *adrogatio*.⁹ While Paul does not specify which type of adoption he meant, we agree with Williams that Paul likely meant *adoptio* (albeit for different reasons than Williams gave!¹⁰). There are some legal intricacies that distinguish the two, but most of the points we make about *adoptio* are equally valid for *adrogatio*.

1. The adopted son in Roman society became the absolute possession of the adopter.

The Roman world was built around the ruling male in each family unit. The Latin word for the power of this man was “*potestas*.”¹¹ *Potestas* power meant that the ruling male could sell his child(ren), enslave his child(ren), had the power of life or death over a child (a power that changed later in Roman civilization), and had ownership control over any property that came to the child(ren). One could marry, only with the permission of the *potestas* father. Having *potestas* power meant that any property owned by the family was owned by the *potestas* empowered male. Now as this is written, it can be misleading. We need to remember that by child(ren), we mean offspring, regardless of age. In other words, when a man chose to adopt a son who was thirty years old, that adopting man took full *potestas* power over that adopted man. *Potestas* power continued as long as the father male lived. Once the *potestas* empowered father died, the *potestas* power passed to the next oldest male in the family.¹²

⁸ Crook, John, *Law and Life of Rome* (Cornell 1967) at 111.

⁹ *Adoptio* and *adrogatio* were two different legal methods for adoption. *Adoptio* was more common and removed the adopted person from his original family. *Adrogatio* transferred the entire family unit, not simply the adopted person. Each legal method had its own elaborate procedure. For a more thorough explanation of the Roman system of adoption see, Borkowski and Plessis, *Textbook on Roman Law* (Oxford 2005) at 135ff.

¹⁰ Williams cites that *adrogatio* occurred only in Rome. Whether that was true at the time of Paul, we must recognize that three of the five times Paul wrote of adoption he was writing to Romans. See Williams, David, *Paul's Metaphors: Their Context and Character* (Hendrickson 1999) at 83. We are more convinced by the fact that *adrogatio* as an adoption approach was only available when a father was childless. See, Borkowski and Plessis, *Textbook on Roman Law* (Oxford 2005) at 137. Certainly, God is not without a Son!

¹¹ Berger, Adolf, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law* (The American Philosophical Society 1991 reprint) at 640.

¹² See Jolowicz and Nicholas, *Historical Introduction to the Study of Roman Law* (Cambridge 1972) at 118ff; Nicholas, Barry, *An Introduction to Roman Law* (Oxford 1975) at 76ff. To see the residual powers of *potestas* from the Roman/Latin culture, watch the Godfather film series!

2. An adoption affected a complete legal change in one's family. The originating family had no more claim to the person – no more *potestas* power.

This complete change in family extended to all areas. When Cicero (106 – 43 BC) took issue with a certain adoption, he compared it to normal adoptions, noting:

These adoptions, as in countless other cases, were followed by the adopted party inheriting the name, the wealth, and the family rites of his adopter.¹³

Cicero's argument presents the compelling Roman factors that pushed adoption and made it so common. There was a perceived need to keep family names alive, including the property rights of the family. That called for the need of a male descendant to claim the *potestas* power of the family as well as the family name. The Roman religious cult also had household gods, particular to each home. It was the *potestas* empowered male who had the power to exercise the religious rites of each family. Failure to provide for a family's future (failure to have a son capable of becoming the *potestas* wielding male) meant that the family's gods would no longer be worshiped. This was deemed to weaken all of Roman society.

We can readily see, when considering the importance of having such offspring, why those families in need of an offspring would adopt someone of appropriate age to have certainty in that adopted person's ability to perform as needed upon the passing of the *potestas* empowered male.

3. When one was adopted, their possessions were all transferred to the *potestas* father.¹⁴ Not only were their possessions transferred, but also their debts and obligations.

The adopting father was bound by the obligations and debts of the adopted son (or daughter, even though adoption of daughters was very rare). This transfer of obligations did not typically include the transfer of ongoing issues of a contract. Those ongoing contractual obligations were extinguished upon adoption.

The process of adopting a male son emphasized this transfer from one family to another. The process (completed in three stages) had two different emphases and procedures. In one, the old *potestas* father would release his rights over the son. In the second procedure, the adopting father would take/buy the family rights over the son.

¹³ Cicero, *De Domo Sua*, xiii.35, (Loeb Classical Library edition #158, at 177, transl. by N. H. Watts).

¹⁴ If the adopted person was already a *potestas* empowered head of his own family, then the other people in his family did not necessarily transfer over to the newly adopting father. That would depend on the type of adoption referenced earlier (*adoptio* or *adrogatio*). Under either type of adoption, however, the possessions kept by the adopted son were automatically transferred, because in a family, only the *potestas* father could hold property.

These two procedures were done three times in front of five witnesses and the appropriate public and governing officials before the adoption was complete.

Once the process was over, the adopted person was a full heir in the new family as if a blood child of the *potestas* father. The old family ties were totally extinguished along with all debts and obligations of the old life.

Application to Scriptures

Having put Roman adoption into its historical culture, now we consider the applications of Paul's metaphorical use of the term. The basics of adoption, as set out earlier, all show the good fit of the metaphor for Paul's teaching on salvation. Consider each:

1. The adopted (the believer) becomes the absolute possession of the adopter (God the Father).

Paul wrote that God had "predestined us for adoption" (Eph. 1:5). God has *potestas* power over the believer. God has the power of life or death over each believer. God has ownership control over any property of the believer. God did not adopt the believer because the believer was fatherless, or an infant in need. God has taken the Christian, regardless of age, as his own possession.

2. The adopted believer has affected a complete legal change in one's family. While the believer had previously been held slave and captive by sin, that old relationship has no more claim to the believer. Only God has *potestas* power over the adopted person.

We should remember that this complete change in family extended to all areas. As Cicero noted was common with all adoptions, the believer has taken on God, the adopting Father's name. Paul says in both Galatians and Romans that we believers who have received "adoption as sons" cry, "Abba! Father!" (Gal. 4:5-6; Rom. 8:15).

The believer has also taken on the father's wealth/inheritance. Unlike the Roman family, however, this inheritance is not one that occurs with the death of the adopting Father, for God cannot die. The inheritance begins at adoption and finds completion upon the death of the believer, when the believer spends eternity with the Father. Paul says as we have passed from our old position of slave to sin into the family of God the Father, we are inheriting sons!

So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God (Gal. 4:7).

This aspect of the adoption is attested to by the Spirit of God, which has been given as a deposit on the inheritance. Paul says in Romans 8:17,

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

In this sense, we await our inheritance, and we might say we await our full adoption, in the sense that we await our final salvation of our bodies. Paul then uses the future tense making this point in Romans 8:23,

And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoptions as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

As for the role of the believer in celebrating the religious rites of the family, that use of the adoption metaphor is obvious. The concept of Paul's inclusion of the Spirit as a guarantee, leads us in obedient worship, prayer, and devotion to our God and Father (see, e.g., Rom. 8:26 "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words").

3. Once adopted, the Christian's possessions were all transferred to God the Father. But perhaps more importantly, all the believer's debts and obligations as slaves to sin were transferred.

Paul drives home this emphasis in the Galatians passage on adoption. Paul explained that prior to adoption, we lived as slaves to sin. But with adoption, we have come to relate to God in a special way as our *potestas* Father. Paul asks,

But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?"

It is not sensible for us to go back and live as slaves to sin when we are now adopted sons to God the Father!

As adopted sons, our old family ties are gone. We are full heirs in the family of God. He has assumed any obligations and debts we might have as slaves to sin (this by his sacrificial payment we discuss more fully in next week's lesson that covers Paul's metaphor of "propitiation"). We stand as children, fully children, in the family of God Almighty!

Before we move back to the Galatians text, we should note a way in which the adoption metaphor does not apply. Unlike the Roman father who needed a son to carry on the name, manage the estate, etc., God has no need of us. God adopts us completely for our good. We have no merit, no attractiveness, nor any basis for deserving his adopting us.

GALATIANS CONTINUED

Paul then uses an allegory from the Old Testament to explain the difference in the children of Abraham by faith and those by law. The children of faith are like the offspring of Sarah, who bore children to Abraham out of the promise of God. The children who claim simply a genetic relation to Abraham who insist on adherence to the law are children of slavery like the offspring of Abraham through Hagar. (Gal. 4:21-31). In an ironic way, the Jew who insists that the Galatian Christian follow the law and be, in essence a “good Jew” is allegorically, a non-Jew child of Abraham through Hagar.

Paul is emphatic that Christians are free from the law. Then, Paul makes a turn on matters that are not ceremonial. Paul explains that as free people with the Spirit of God indwelling, we actually have the sense and the power now to walk holy in matters of ethics, morality, and attitude. We have the Spirit leading us to the fruit of “love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23). This fruit is beyond the letters of legal action. Like all fruit, they grow from the inside out. They proceed from the indwelling Spirit of God.

This same Spirit leads us away from the dead works of the flesh: “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these” (Gal. 5:19-21). These are deeds of the unsaved.

With this encouragement and correction, Paul brings his letter to a close urging the common bond of love to have the Galatians help each other through sin and burdens. Paul gives a personal touch to the letter writing in his own large letters (Gal. 6:11). Paul then closes with a final word that circumcision, just as other formal Jewish requirements of the law, truly counts for nothing. Paul wants no boasting by any in what they do, but simply in the love of the sacrificed Messiah, Jesus.

Questions for Discussion

Consider building questions around these passages:

1. In your heart of hearts, do you feel you merit God’s love? Have you truly taken time to confess your inadequacies to him, seeking his forgiveness and mercy?
2. In what ways do you find assurance in being “adopted” by God?
3. Do you find it difficult to “hold onto” the simple truth of God’s redemption in Christ?

4. Do you struggle with walking by faith rather than by works? How can you walk in the victory of faith?

Week Thirty-one Readings

<p>7/28 Paul to the Galatians Christ sets Free Gal 5:1-15</p> <p>Walk by the Spirit Gal 5:16-26</p> <p>Lk 17:1-10 Ps 62 Rm 8:26-39 Isa 41:5-29 Ex 23:1-9 Prv 12:9-10, 12, 14-16, 18, 23, 26 Prv 23:29-35 Prv 25:19</p>	<p>7/29 Paul to the Galatians Living by the Spirit Gal 5:25-26</p> <p>Job 13-14 Job 20 Job 22</p> <p>7/30 Paul to the Galatians Bearing Burdens Gal 6:1-5</p> <p>Job 6-9</p> <p>7/31 Paul to the Galatians Bearing Burdens Gal 6:1-5 Cont'd</p> <p>Job 10-11</p> <p>Reap as Sown Gal 6:6-18</p> <p>Dt 30 Mic 1:1-4:5</p>	<p>8/1 Paul to the Galatians Reap as Sown Gal 6:6-18 Cont'd</p> <p>Ecc 11:6-12:14 Prv 22:3-5 Prv 27:12 2 Chron 32:27-33:25 Isa 39</p> <p>8/2 The Jerusalem Council Acts 15:1-21</p> <p>Prv 11:14 Prv 15:28 Amos 8-9 Prv 20:18</p> <p>Letter to Gentiles Acts 15:22-35</p> <p>Prv 15:21-24</p> <p>8/3 Off</p>
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