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Description automatically generated**True Freedom in Grace:**

**A Study in Paul’s Letter to the Galatians**

**Session 7: More Radical Inheritance**

June 13, 2022 • Monday Night Bible Study

1. **Introductions and Prayer**
   1. Teaser: When you were coming of age, what was one of the signs that you were an adult? Was that how you knew you were a “grown up,” or was there something else?
   2. Prayer
2. **Recap: Knowing the Galatians & Greeting**
   1. Galatians — Galatia is a mountainous region in Turkey. The Galatians are mostly Gentiles, wanting to be hard-core for God. Paul was the founder of some churches in Galatia. This letter would have been read aloud in worship at one house-church, then passed to another. Probably written in 50–56 AD.
   2. Themes to watch for — Some Jewish-Christian missionaries are telling the Christians in Galatia that they have to keep all the Jewish Law to be saved. Paul wants to be clear that grace is what matters. Watch how Paul defines grace and how it affects/changes Jesus’ followers and their futures.
   3. Context — Early in Chapter 3, Paul uses the example of a will (or covenant) as a metaphor to talk about the promises of God. Paul talks about how the promises/will/covenant God gave Abraham is still active today, and that a second covenant—the Law given by Moses—was given to show us how *not* to live, a kind of “baby-sitter/tutor” to help us know the boundaries of right living, until Jesus would come to transform our lives. In this passage, watch for how and why we receive those promises.
3. **Words to watch for**
   1. Grace (*charis*) — related to the words for gift and joy ☺
   2. covenant — solemn agreement or promise that establishes a relationship. Here Paul talks about how two OT covenants (with Abraham and with Moses) are related. Covenants can only be set aside if all parties agree.
   3. sons vs. children of God — While we prefer the more gender neutral *child/children*—and that’s how we would read it in worship or for devotions—when talking about a will or inheritance in a Bible study, we recognize that in the patriarchal culture of Roman society, the word son is more culturally accurate. See next note.
   4. “you are all sons of God through faith” — Primogeniture (rights and inheritance of the first-born, favored son) was important in Greco-Roman law. Paul is saying that everyone in Christ is a first-born, favored “son”—regardless of culture, status or gender.
   5. faith — trust, belief. Usually the verb form of this is translated as *believe*.
   6. slave (*doulos*) — In Greco-Roman society, you had freemen (often tradesmen and merchants), servants (chamberlains, foremen, etc; position of some prestige), and slaves (*doulos*). Slaves had limited rights, limited upward mobility and no social status.
   7. heir (*kleronomos*) — someone who will receive the full inheritance
   8. elemental principles (*stoicheia*) — in English, we have this word as stoichiometry in chemistry, the rules and calculations for determining chemical reactions. Before Christ, we are bound by laws of physics, economics, logistics, etc. and limited by them. Christ breaks chains that bind us, making material laws no longer determinative for our future. Our relationship with Christ now determines how we live, and what happens after.
   9. *Abba* — in Aramiaic—Jesus’ first language—a term of endearment for father; Daddy
4. **Reading Galatians 3:26–4:7**
5. **Questions for Reflection**
   1. What do you think/feel about the idea of God “adopting” you?
   2. Paul uses the metaphor of being “clothed in Christ.” Christ’s “clothing” covers over and equalizes all the stigmas and low places in our lives. Can you list some of the “marks” against you? How has knowing Jesus “clothed” or covered over those marks?
   3. In our neighborhood, what are the dividing lines between people? How does Jesus break those down in your own life? In our church fellowship, how do we break down those barriers?
   4. Often we live our lives according to the “elementary principles of the world”—what the Bible often calls wisdom. How do you recognize when you can/should lean on your inheritance with Christ?
6. **Why does this matter?**
   1. Our inheritance through faith in Christ is not just something for after we die, but it is meant to change how we live—with boldness, hope and power!
   2. Paul echoes Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, saying that the Holy Spirit enables us to cry out to God, “Daddy, Father!” This tells us God has left the door open to tremendous intimacy with us. We can go in and climb up into God’s lap for prayer.

**Faith/Trust/Believe**

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| **Usual English** | **Better English** | **Part of Speech** | **Greek** |
| Faith | trust or belief | noun | *pistis* |
| faith | trust or believe | verb | *pisteuo* |
| faithful | objectively, trustworthy, subjectively, trustful | adjective | *pistos* |

**What Do We Know about the Life of Paul?**

* Birthname was Saul. After becoming Christian, changed his name to Paul.
* Born in Tarsus, a city on the southern coast of what is now Turkey, near northern Syria. Tarsus was a Roman colony, which meant Paul was a Roman citizen. Being a Roman citizen was a privileged status, and brought certain benefits and protections that saved Paul’s life.
* Studied under Gamaliel, one of the greatest Jewish Rabbis of the first century, really ever.
* Paul was a Pharisee, the hardest core, most passionate, elite, keepers of the Law. Paul was considered to be the “elite of the elite.”
* Virulently, violently opposed the early Christians, those of “The Way.”
* Held people’s cloaks so they could more easily throw rocks at Stephen, the first Christian killed for his faith. (See Acts 7. Paul’s cameo is in 8:1.)
* Got warrants from Jewish authorities to persecute the church: “But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, Saul dragged off men and women and put them in prison.” (Acts 8:3)
* When the early Christians scattered ahead of these persecutions, Paul got warrants to follow the Christians to Damascus, capture them and return to Jerusalem. (Acts 9:1–2)
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* Jesus appears to Paul on the road to Damascus, blinds Paul and sends him on to Damascus. Paul is healed by a brave Christian, named Ananias, and begins life as a Christian.