

Grown Up Faith

Galatians 3:15 – 4:7

INTRODUCTION

- **When did you first start to care about being clean before going out?**
- **When did you first put on grown-up clothes?**
 - My mom dressed me in suspenders & a bow-tie as a toddler.
 - I wore a uniform at Publix, my first job.
- **What do you do today to clean yourself up and get dressed when you want to make the best impression?**
 - Look around.
- **Being clean and clothed physically is what makes us presentable to the world.**
 - Children can be dirty and naked and still be accepted (e.g. Martin in the backyard this week. Kid across the street.)
 - Adults are held to a higher standard. Some people struggle with that transition.
- **Big Idea: Being clean and clothed spiritually is what makes us presentable to God.**
 - Many of us came into this room today clean and clothed physically, but dirty and naked spiritually. Some know it, feel embarrassed and are just trying to blend in without anybody noticing. Others are unaware there's a problem. It's all you know. Either way, some of us are stuck in a childish faith (childlike faith is good; childish faith is not, at least not for long).
 - Col 1:21-22. Christ's purpose is to present us holy and blameless—spiritually clean and clothed—before God. He wants us to have a grown up faith.
- **Growing up is hard to do.**
 - It's a big deal when we grow up to the point where we're able and willing to clean & clothe ourselves without being told.
 - It's also a big deal to grow up spiritually. It's not easy. That's why it's so easy to get stuck.
- **The passage of Scripture we'll see today (Galatians 3:15-4:7) can help us grow up in our faith.** It paints a picture of how you and I can grow up spiritually, from a childish faith to a grown up faith.
 - The whole section is Gal 3:15-4:7. It's a long section and we won't read all of it, but it's summarized very helpfully in 3:26-29, especially verse 26 so we'll focus our attention there and use these verses as a guide to a grown up faith.

1. Verse 26 says, “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith”

a. The Audience

- i. “You are all” [SHOW SLIDE HIGHLIGHTING “YOU ARE ALL”]
- ii. Who is the audience? People who are all something. People who share something in common that unites them.
 1. ***This section contains a message to people who are all united by three things.*** These three things aren’t necessarily true of everyone here today, but they are all good things, important things that I hope you’re thinking about. They *can* certainly be true of you, if they aren’t yet.
- iii. **They are all spiritually presentable.** Verse 27 says “*for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*” They are clean and clothed spiritually through two experiences: being baptized into Christ, and being clothed with Christ.
 1. Baptism is a washing by the Spirit
 - a. Ezekiel 36:25-27. “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations. “And you will live in Israel, the land I gave your ancestors long ago. You will be my people, and I will be your God.
 2. Clothing covers our shame.
 - a. Clothing is a big deal in the Bible. It shows up very near the beginning when God made clothes for the first man and woman. Genesis 3:21 says “God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.” Why? To cover their shame. For maybe 100 years Adam and Eve were both naked and they felt no shame” (Genesis 2:25).
3. ***So, the message of this section is for those who are spiritual presentable—those who are clean and clothed spiritually.***

- iv. **They are all in the new family of Jesus.** Verse 28 says, “*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*”
1. The message is for those who are not primarily identified by ethnicity or nationality (most especially Jew or non-Jew), by class or status, or by gender. That’s good because now there’s a chance this message is for everyone here today
 2. ***The message of this section is for those who are primarily identified by their association with Jesus Christ.*** It is written to people who are part of the new family of Jesus, regardless of their family of origin.
 3. Family of origin is a big deal. Pastor and author Peter Scazzero writes, [read quotes from EHS pp. 71, 82-83]. **[SHOW QUOTE SLIDES]**
- v. **They are all recipients of a promised inheritance.** Verse 29 says, “*if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*”
1. This gets us into the meat of this larger section and the big idea we need to get in order to grow up in faith. What I’m about to read contrasts a promise God made to Abraham (the father of the Jewish nation) with the Law he gave through Moses (one of the most important prophets and leaders in Jewish history).
 2. The question, debate, crisis at hand is how God’s promised inheritance is secured? In other words, God has promised an incredible inheritance. Who receives it? And what makes them qualified to be a recipient? And where does the confusion come from in the first place?
 3. Read Galatians 3:15-22.
 4. God made a promise to Abraham that one of his descendants, Jesus Christ, would receive an inheritance. 430 years after the promise, but long before Jesus came into the picture, God gave laws to all of Abraham’s descendants at the time (i.e. the Jewish nation, Israel) through Moses. He gave the law because the people were being controlled by sin—wrong attitudes and actions. The law didn’t replace the promise, and it didn’t have anything to do with qualifying people to receive the promise. The inheritance was promised only to Jesus Christ, that’s it. Verse 22 tells us more people actually could receive the inheritance, but it would depend on their relationship to Jesus, not their relationship to the law.
 5. ***The message of this section is for people who have received the promised inheritance because of their relationship with Jesus, but there’s a problem.*** Maybe you can relate to this.
 - a. They’ve received the inheritance and deposited in their account, but now they’re confused about how to access it.
 - b. They’ve signed up and been put on the team, but now they’re confused about how to play the game.

- c. They've received the key to the car, but they don't know how to drive.
 - d. They've got faith, but truth be known, deep down, they're really not sure what having faith means. It's new, it's real, but it's not mature. It's not a grown up faith.
6. To me, this raises two questions.
- a. What is this promised inheritance?
 - b. What is the message?

b. The Message: Children of God are grown children. [SHOW SLIDE]

- i. "Children of God" [SHOW "CHILDREN OF GOD" SLIDE]
- ii. READ 3:23-25; 4:1-7
- iii. Children of God have reached maturity/adulthood and you have now received the promised inheritance. You are grown children—inheritance recipients—and now you no longer need the law as a spiritual babysitter.
- iv. The inheritance is the blessing of Abraham (i.e. the gift of the Spirit and the working of miracles) (per Galatians 3:5,14 → Isaiah 44:3).
 - 1. Grown children possess the Holy Spirit and are now ready to make right choices on their own. To learn and grow through listening and responding to the Spirit for themselves.
 - 2. Being a grown child has more responsibility, but it's way better than always being told what to do. Young kids instinctively know this. They can't wait to grow up and do things on their own. Sometimes we adults forget how much better it is, and we wish for the simpler days when we were kids. But we wouldn't really trade our independence. It wouldn't be good.
 - 3. It's the same spiritually. If you have been washed by the Spirit and clothed in Christ, you're presentable to God and it's time to exercise a grown up faith. That means not waiting to be told what to do, then doing just enough to get by, or complaining about all the rules, or rebelling against the wisdom of your father. You now possess the very Spirit of Christ, and it's time to be an adult. You're still God's child, but a grown up child with a grown up faith.
- v. The Jewish nation had to wait through childhood. The Gentiles were adopted as adults. Is there a modern analogy of this?
 - 1. For families of faith, this history is repeated. Children in Christian homes are taught faith by their parents, but their faith is not their own until the Spirit takes up residence in their soul and begins to change them from the inside out. Children, this is something to seek, to ask God for, to pursue. Parents, this is something to rely on. For those who've come to faith through the training and spiritual guardianship of your parents, to have been trained and prepared to receive the Spirit is a great gift of grace.

2. For those who come to faith as adults, you are adopted as a grown child of God. You receive the Spirit at the moment of faith. That's a great gift of grace.
- vi. However you came to faith, you're past the stage of spiritual babysitting. By learning to hear and follow the Spirit's voice, you can have a grown up faith.

c. The Message: Faith is simply believing what God says. [SHOW SLIDE]

- i. "Through faith" in God's promise, not obedience to God's law. [SHOW "THROUGH FAITH" SLIDE]
- ii. Faith is believing God's promise (i.e. "believing what you heard," 3:5, like Abraham believed what he heard from God).

d. The Message: Jesus Christ is the way. [SHOW SLIDE]

- i. "In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith." [SHOW "IN CHRIST JESUS" SLIDE]
- ii. People of faith are incorporated into Christ Jesus now that, in salvation history, Israel has reached adulthood, and they believe God's promises.
- iii. ILLUS. Often my kids don't believe my "promises," but God always delivers on his.