

12. Learning to Become “Adult Sons”

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn what it means to be the children of God. We saw that this new relationship has great blessings both for us and for all who place their faith in Christ. Today, we are going to see how we help children of God become “adult sons and daughters”. Our purpose is not just to lead people to Christ. Instead, our purpose is to help our physical and spiritual children become “adult sons” who are mature reproducing Christians that have become full partners with us in the work of the Lord. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In Galatians 4:1-2, we read, “Now I say *that* the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father.” In Galatians 3, we see that a person is under the law until that person comes to Christ. Once that person comes to Christ, he is set free from the law. In Galatians 4, we have this illustrated for us in a very interesting way. In the time when the New Testament was written, about half of the people in the Roman Empire were slaves. Here, in the first two verses, we see that a child was no different than a slave. In fact, he was under the supervision of various slaves.

The child was the one who would one day receive the inheritance of the father. However, the father had set a time when his child would be considered an adult. Until the child reached that time, certain slaves served as his guardians to supervise and protect the child. Other slaves served as stewards to manage what would one day belong to the child. Finally, the day would come that the father had set for that child to be recognized as an adult. Suddenly, there was a great change. Instead of the slaves supervising the child, the child that had been recognized as an “adult son” was now over the slaves. The slaves would begin to carry out the will of the son as well as the will of the father. This is the illustration that we have in the first verses of chapter four.

Galatians 4:3 says, “Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.” Here, we see that before we became Christians, we were like children or slaves. Before we placed our faith in Christ, we were in bondage to the various elements or things of the world. Most people before they became Christians had been following some religion. Although the Jews had the Old Testament law whose purpose was to show people their need to come to Christ, most of the Jews had been controlled by the bondage of the law because they had tried to keep the law instead of coming to God by faith. In the same way, all Gentile religions also had many rules. These rules also kept the Gentiles in bondage.

Galatians 4:4-5 says, “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” God had given the law to show people they were sinful. However, God had set the time when He would send His Son to this earth. According to the time that God had set, the day came when Christ was born. As we know from studying the Gospels, Christ was born when the law was in effect. As a Jewish boy and young man, Jesus also had to keep the Jewish law. However, there was one difference from every other person. Because Jesus is God, He was

able to keep the law perfectly. That was necessary in order for Jesus to be able to pay the penalty for our sin. Each temptation where Adam failed, Christ had victory over Satan by quoting and obeying the Word of God.

We want to help our children understand that the perfect obedience of Christ was what made it possible for Him to pay the penalty for our sin so that He could set us free. The word “redeem” means *to buy back or deliver by paying a price* and has three parts:

Christ bought us back from the penalty of sin.

Christ removed us from further sale.

Christ set us free.

It was necessary for Christ to redeem us from the slavery of sin because we were all under the bondage of the law. We had no power within ourselves to keep the law perfectly. As a result, we were slaves to sin until Christ bought us back and we accepted His payment for our sin by faith. In addition to making the payment for our sin, Christ also removed us from further sale so that we could not be delivered back into the bondage and penalty of sin again. Finally, Christ set us free to live a new life and gave us a new nature with new desires to make it possible to live that new life. Then, He gave us the Holy Spirit as the down payment and guarantee of our salvation.

Galatians 4:6 says, “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’” The Holy Spirit is the One who gives us the power to carry out these new desires that Christ has given us. Christ told the disciples in Luke 24:49, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” We want to help our children understand that the Holy Spirit is our source of power. At each moment that we are yielding our lives to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit gives us the power to say no to sin and to carry out the new desires that Christ has given us.

That is why Galatians 4:7 says, “Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” As Christians, we want to help our children realize that they are no longer slaves to sin. They have been set free from the bondage of sin. Now they are the children of God. As we have seen in the previous topic, this means that we will all share the inheritance of Christ throughout eternity. Since we want our physical and spiritual children to understand fully what this means we want to help them learn to become “adult sons”.

Christ showed us the process to help our children learn how to help others become adult sons. A group of fishermen had been following Christ for about a year. In Matthew 4:19, Christ said, “Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” Then, Matthew 4:23 tells what Christ did as He took those men with Him. That verse says, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.” Here, we see that Christ showed these men what to teach and what to do.

About nine months later, Christ sent these men out to do what they had been watching Him do. Luke 9:1-2 says, “Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority

over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.” Here, Christ began to give these men experience teaching what they had seen Him teach. Mark 6:30 tells us what happened when they returned. That verse says, “Then the apostles gathered to Jesus and told Him all things, both what they had done and what they had taught.” Christ had them explain what they had taught and the other things that they had done.

Christ then spent an additional 21 months taking the disciples with Him so that He could both show them and teach them how to become “adult sons” and partners in ministry. During that time, He sent them out on at least one additional preaching trip along with a larger group of disciples. Luke 10:1 says, “After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.” Here, we see that Christ balanced instruction, example and on-the-job experience to train the disciples to become “adult sons”.

Then, the night before His crucifixion, Christ said in John 15:15-16, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” Here, we see that Christ elevated the disciples from servants to friends, said He had taught them all that He had heard from the Father, and told them what He had chosen them to do.

After the resurrection, in John 20:17, Christ called them brethren. Then, He said to them in John 20:21, “So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’” The final words of Christ to the disciples before He returned to heaven are recorded in Acts 1:8 where Christ said, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” Here, we see that Christ had now made the disciples “adult sons” and full partners in ministry and told them to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

If we follow the example of Christ as we should, we will help our physical and spiritual children become “adult sons” and full partners in the ministry of the Lord. Every Christian is called to become a disciple and then make disciples. Matthew 28:19-20 says, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.’ Amen.” Here, we see that we are to help our children become “adult sons” and equip them to become partners with us and make disciples of all of the nations. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children how to become “adult sons and daughters” and full partners in ministry who are equipped to Make Disciples.