

FPFWC Christian Development



Faith Triumphs, Law Falls

October 2023

Fall Quarter

October 28, 2023

Lesson #4 – Freedom as an Heir

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Galatians 3:23-4:7

ICE BREAKERS-

1. How did the coming of Jesus perfectly satisfy the requirements of the Law?
2. What are the benefits of being a part of God's family?

Key Verse: “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” — Galatians 3:26

LESSON BACKGROUND –

In today's printed text, Paul continued his efforts to instruct the Galatian Christians about the correct relationship between law and grace. Because of some false teachers called Judaizers, the churches in the province of Galatia were adding works of the law to the gospel of Christ (Galatians 1:6–10). Paul reflected on his own “exceedingly zealous” experience in Judaism (1:14) as he highlighted his inability to follow the law to the point of justification (2:15–21; see lesson 7). Through Christ, the promise of salvation had been revealed to the whole world (3:6–9; see lesson 8). Paul went on to show the unifying nature of that salvation for all who would believe in Christ. Because of Paul's preaching of the gospel of grace, some of his opponents accused him of acting in contradiction to the Old Testament (example: Acts 18:12–13). While Paul presented the new message of grace without apology, he also readily acknowledged that there was a purpose for the old Law of Moses. He strenuously maintained that the new is superior, but that the old had a vital purpose in God's plan. Galatians 3:15–22 (immediately preceding our printed text) focuses on the illustration of Abraham's (singular) seed. It is in Christ alone that God fulfilled the law. And this fulfillment did not do away with the promises God made; far from it! Instead, Jesus was the means by which God made good on the promises to Abraham and his descendants. In 3:21–22, Paul focused on the limitation of the law, namely that it could not impart righteousness or life.

LESSON COMMENTARY

The Coming of Faith (3:23–4:11) 3:23–25. Paul explained further the law's temporary function. We (v. 23) refers to Jews. They were under the law in that their lives were regulated by it (cf. 1Co 9:20). Here faith (v. 23 twice, v. 25) cannot be mere human trust in God, for Paul demonstrated that Abraham already had such faith (3:6–9; cf. Rm 4:3). Rather, as in 1:23, faith is the virtual equivalent of gospel. The coming of the gospel ended the rule of law. The tutor

(better “guardian” ESV, or even “chaperone”; paidagogos is only here and in 1Co 4:15) supervised minors. A child’s coming of age ended the guardian’s role (v. 25; 4:1–2). Thus, just as a guardian’s role was temporary, so was the law’s. The middle of v. 24 does not give a purpose statement (NASB: “to lead us” is not found in the original text) but a temporal expression and is better translated by the ESV: “our guardian until Christ came.” 3:26–29. In 3:15–18 Paul implied that the legalists brought up the question of who was in Abraham’s—and thus God’s—family (“seed,” v. 16; see also v. 29). Now in the age of the gospel not only Jews are God’s children (sons; cf. Ex 4:22; Dt 14:1; Hs 11:1). Instead, all (that is, even Gentiles) can become children by faith. Just as all can become children, so all can belong to Christ (v. 29a). Paul used baptism as shorthand for conversion, since when being baptized one gave evidence of inner faith by public confession of Christ (cf. Rm 10:9–10; 1Co 12:3), and only those receiving Christian baptism were already believers. As he did elsewhere (Eph 4:24; Col 3:10), Paul’s metaphor of changing clothes (v. 27: clothed ... with) illustrates that conversion entails becoming a new person. Verse 28 puts all on the same footing (one in Christ); all are equally welcome to come to Christ. Not all are simply equivalent, however. If Jews, Greeks, slaves, free, male and female no longer existed, Paul could not make such comments as “to the Jew first” (Rm 2:9–10), “slaves obey your masters” (Eph 6:5), and “wives, submit to your own husbands” (Eph 5:22). Likewise, if in church ministry there is no difference in role between men and women, Paul could not say that elders are men (1Tm 3:1–2) and that women are excluded from teaching leadership (1Tm 2:12). Since becoming Abraham’s family happens according to promise, it does not happen by law. It is God’s act of grace received by faith. 4:1–7. Using the illustration of the heir as a minor (child), Paul further explained that the law’s role was for a time when God’s people were minors; that time was over. A child, as a person undeveloped, must learn basics first. In this context, the basics learned (elemental things, v. 3) were the OT laws as regulators of all life and as revealers of sin. They were further called guardians and managers (v. 2; Paul used the terms synonymously). Naturally, a time comes when basics are left behind. The phrase When the fullness of time came (v. 4) does not speak of human events that constrained God. Rather, the Father set the time in advance. The time’s completion (fullness, v. 4) was brought about by the coming of the Son. His coming is the center of history. The Son is fully prepared to redeem (v. 5; see comments on 3:13) because He is fully human (born) and fully Jewish (under the Law is the position of a Jewish person, Rm 2:12; 1Co 9:20–21). Both expressions those ... under the Law and we refer to Jews. Adoption into God’s family was originally a uniquely Jewish blessing (Rm 9:4), which now has also come to Gentiles (you, v. 6; the pronoun is pl.). Closely related to adoption is receiving the Spirit (cf. Rm 8:14–17). The Spirit imparts assurance of being God’s children (sons) and enables believers to recognize and confess their new intimate relationship with God (Abba). Making this truth personal to each reader, there is a shift from the plural (you pl.; our) in v. 6 to the singular in v. 7: you (sg.) are no longer a slave. Paul switched easily from child (vv. 1, 3) to son (vv. 6–7) since in this context the terms are not gender specific (cf. 3:28; Rm 8:14–16).

LESSON NUGGET – Beware! A false gospel robs you of salvation and of membership in the family of God where all believers are one in Christ. It robs you of your spiritual riches as an heir of the promise. Are you rejoicing in the freedom you have in Christ?

Sources: Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary