

LESSON 9

October 29, 2023

Unit II: Faith Triumphs, Law Fails Free to Live a Mature Life

DEVOTIONAL READING: Genesis 12:1-9

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Galatians 3:19–4:7

PRINT PASSAGES: Galatians 3:23-29; 4:1-7

KEY VERSE

Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26, KJV)

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In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. (Galatians 3:26, NIV)

LESSON AIMS

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Investigate the implications of the freedom that Jesus brings.
- Marvel at the inheritance that God gives to His children.
- Model free and faithful living as God's people.

*KEY TERMS

Guardian (3:24)—Greek: *paidagōgos* (pahee-dag-o-gos'): a trainer of boys; a tutor; "schoolmaster" (KJV).

Law (3:23)—Greek: *nomos* (nom'-os): that which is assigned, usage; custom; principle.

Redeem (4:5)—Greek: *exagorazo* (ex-ag-or-ad'-zo): to buy up, ransom; to rescue from loss.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

INTRODUCTION

Before the end of his first year in college, a young man called his grandmother, telling her that he wanted to come home because of the "traumatic" experience of adjusting to campus life just thirty miles from home. Thinking she would sympathize with him, he was shocked by her response: "Son, it's time for you to grow up!" Taken by surprise by the firmness in her voice, all he could do was say, "Yes, ma'am," and try to cope with his issues until the semester ended. His grandmother's words were just what he needed to force him to "grow up," begin maturing, and face the responsibilities of adulthood.



The Biblical Context

With a sense of urgency, Paul continues to make the case that faith in Christ is essential to *justification* (becoming righteous in God's sight). The Galatians believed in Jesus and enjoyed Christian freedom due to Paul's preaching. Then, however, Jewish legalists (Judaizers) showed up claiming that in addition to believing in Jesus, males had to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic Law to be included in God's family. After proving from the Galatians' experience and Scripture that God's plan of salvation did not embrace the works of the Law, Paul presents the legal argument that giving the Law did not cancel God's original covenant with Abraham that preceded it. So now, all who come to Christ by faith are heirs to that inheritance, one in Christ—Jews, Greeks, slaves, the free, male, and female—and adopted into God's family (see Galatians 3:15-29; 4:1-7).

The grandmother guided the young man into making responsible choices without depending on her and the emotional safety net of home's familiarity. Similarly, some believers have difficulty spiritually maturing because they think they need to rely on things they can see and do rather than faith to live as a Christian. That was the truth Paul was trying to convey to the Galatian Christians. Judaizers had convinced them that depending on the Law would make them better Christians. Instead, it was regressing to the deceptive comfort of spiritual childhood, like the college student's immature desire to leave school and return home. It was time for them to "grow up" and realize their status as Christ's heirs, not slaves to the Law.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

The Law before Christ (Galatians 3:23-25)

KJV

23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.

24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to

bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

NIV

23 Before the coming of this faith, we were held in custody under the law, locked up until the faith that was to come would be revealed.

24 So the law was our guardian until Christ came that we might be justified by faith.

25 Now that this faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.

These verses summarize Paul's argument that God never intended the Law as the final recourse for humanity's sin problem. In previous verses, he proved that the Law could not give life to people because no one can keep it perfectly. Once we understand what God requires, the Law shows us how sinful and incapable we are of living up to its standards. In **verse 23**, Paul personifies the Law as a jailer or prison temporarily holding Israel and anyone desiring to be right with God captive before Christ came. To illustrate the Law's purpose, Paul compares the Law to a "pedagogue" or *paidagogos* (**verse 24**). Pedagogue, in this context, is not a "schoolmaster" but

an enslaved person charged with guarding children against society's evil and providing moral training.

That was the Law's function until Christ came. People could be justified by faith in Him, making the Law's guardianship no longer necessary (**verse 25**). Believers must understand the real meaning of being justified by faith to avoid the useless trap of switching church affiliations, following multiple spiritual growth plans, accepting new revelations, and heeding unnecessary rules and regulations to be right with God. The motivation to follow God's established standards for the Christian life results from being declared righteous only by faith.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How can you explain justification by faith without compromising God's expectation of obeying His Word?

A Positional Change (*Galatians 3:26-29*)

KJV

26 For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

NIV

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,

27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Paul's defense of the doctrine of justification reached a climax in this section, noting three changes in the position of the justified sinner. First, all who accept Christ by faith become children of God (**verses 26-27**). The Law served as a disciplinarian, and those supervised by it were as children. Because Christ had come, the Galatian Christians were adult offspring through faith, no longer needing a guardian. The Gentiles were not to think of themselves as inferior members of God's family. Everyone who trusts in Christ for salvation is a full son or daughter of God with all rights, privileges, and responsibilities accompanying this new status.

Verse 27 describes the connection making this new position possible—a living union with Christ through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the moment He comes to live with and in the believer. This special union means being “clothed with Christ,” completely covered by Him. This symbolism would not be missed by those familiar with Roman society's practice of giving a special toga to male youths coming of age and admitting them to full family rights and the

status of adult sons. Second, all believers became one with each other in Christ, thus removing all human distinctions (**verse 28**). None are spiritually superior to another in God's family. The believing Jew is no more privileged than the believing Gentile, the enslaved are the free person's spiritual equals, and believing women and men are peers in Christ.

This affirms that racial, gender, or ethnic differences do not imply any spiritual inequality in His sight. Finally, all believers in Christ are Abraham's seed and heirs of God's promise of justification by faith to Abraham (**verse 29**). This changed status applies to believers now in at least two ways. All believers must demonstrate progressive spiritual maturity and strive to eliminate barriers that separate believers based on physical and other external distinctions.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Why is it essential for believers to progressively become more like Christ?

Before and After (*Galatians 4:1-7*)

KJV

NOW I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all;

2 But is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.

3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world:

4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

NIV

WHAT I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate.

2 The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.

3 So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world.

4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Paul continued teaching that it was foolish for the Galatians to follow the Law to gain God's acceptance. He started with an illustration from Greek culture and the kind of servitude that heirs of the rich endured until receiving their inheritance. Although they would ultimately own everything the family possessed, wealthy children lived without much freedom. Until then, the heir was kept in a subservient role, living under the authority of guardians and trustees (**verses 1-2**). Paul applied this illustration to Jews' and Gentiles' former state of spiritual immaturity as slaves to the primary elements and rituals of their religions to achieve divine acceptance (**verse 3**). **Verse 4** introduces the divine intervention that brought hope and freedom from the Law's bondage. As human fathers chose the time for their male children to become adult sons, the heavenly Father chose the time of Christ's coming to make the transitional provision from the Law's bondage to spiritual sonship. The purpose of His coming was twofold (**verse 5**). The first was to redeem humanity from the Law's bondage, and the second was to provide the opportunity for adoption into God's family. This adoption's confirmation is the gift of the Holy Spirit coupled with the right to call out to God as "Abba Father" (daddy) just as young children intimately address their fathers (**verse 6**). Finally, Paul assured that we are no longer enslaved but are mature sons and daughters and heirs entitled to share in all the inheritance of Christ (**verse 7**). Because of God's grace, all believers are justified by faith and free to live as His people, access His wisdom, champion His efforts that challenge class and religious distinctions, and extend Christian freedom to all.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In what specific and doable ways can the church extend its collective Christian freedom to others?

A CLOSING THOUGHT

Every justified believer is free to live a spiritually mature life. Christ's sacrificial death frees Christians from keeping religious rules and regulations to earn God's acceptance. This freedom carries with it urgent and essential responsibilities. Additionally, there is the responsibility to pursue sanctification to become more like Christ daily. Finally, believers must acknowledge and commit to using their freedom in Christ to show love without discrimination. Each believer is to minister to others' needs and evangelize the lost.

YOUR LIFE

The application of this lesson includes using your Christian freedom to confront negative class and religious distinctions, systemic racism, and discrimination. This week, identify the occurrence of these attitudes and behaviors. Then, seek the Holy Spirit's guidance to address them with godly wisdom and Christian love.

YOUR WORLD!

Some believers are imprisoned by keeping rules and regulations to please God. With your class, review your church's membership requirements and identify any that border on legalism. How can these areas be addressed, adjusted, or abandoned to ensure Christian freedom without compromising the Gospel?

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, thank You for sending Christ at the right time to secure our Christian freedom. In gratitude we commit to using our freedom for Your glory and extending it to others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

CONCLUSION

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Consider this question as you study next week's lesson: "How can the church enlarge its spiritual vision to become more inclusive?"

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, October 30	"Welcoming God's New People"	(Acts 15:12-21)
TUESDAY, October 31	"Salvation Is from the Lord"	(Psalm 37:27-40)
WEDNESDAY, November 1	"My Help Comes from the Lord"	(Psalm 121)
THURSDAY, November 2	"We Are All One Body"	(1 Corinthians 12:12-20)
FRIDAY, November 3	"God Is Near to Anyone"	(Acts 17:22-34)
SATURDAY, November 4	"Salvation for All People"	(Isaiah 56)
SUNDAY, November 5	"Saved through the Grace of Jesus"	(Acts 15:1-11)

Notes
