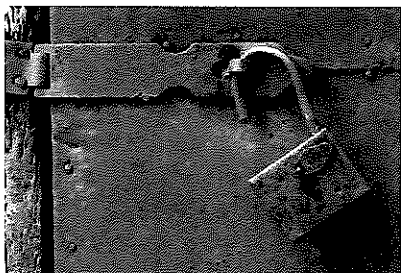


# From Servant to Son



## Topic

Freedom in Christ

## Theme

Christ releases sinners from bondage and leads them into blessing.

## Desired Learner Response

The learner will appreciate being part of God's family.

## Materials

- Resources 1 and 9

## Scripture Focus

Galatians 3:23–4:7

## Summary

Before Christ died on the cross, the law functioned as a disciplinarian keeping people in bondage. However, Christ fulfilled the law. He shed His blood to pay the penalty the law required and to redeem those who were under the law. Redeemed by the blood of Christ, believers are God's sons and heirs.

## Outline

### I. The Law Led to Christ (Gal. 3:23–29)

- A. The Law was a schoolmaster (3:23, 24)
- B. Faith closed the school of law (3:25, 26)
- C. In Christ is the promise (3:27–29)

### II. Christ Led to Adoption in God's Family (Gal. 4:1–7)

- A. The law imposed bondage (4:1–3)
- B. Christ redeemed from the bondage of law (4:4, 5)
- C. In Christ is sonship (4:6, 7)

## Memory Verses

*"And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:6, 7).*



## GETTING STARTED

### From Server to Son

**ASK:** Suppose twenty members of a family reunion came to the restaurant where you worked as a server. How would you react? (Q1)

**ASK:** How would you respond if the family invited you to stop working and be a part of their family as an honorary son? (Q2)

Paul used the analogy of moving from a servant to a son to help us understand what happened when Israel went from law to faith. His analogy will challenge us to consider our life in the family of God.

### Church Analogies

**ASK:** Finish the following sentence: Church is like . . .

**ASK:** Would you agree or disagree that church is like a family reunion?

Paul called the Galatian believers sons of God to help them see their familial relationship in Christ and their freedom from the law.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The law, which the Judaizers were applauding, served as an instrument of bondage. The good news of the gospel declares that Christ died to bring sinners out of bondage and into membership in God's family.

### I. The Law Led to Christ (Gal. 3:23–29)

The Judaizers thought that by keeping the law they could please God and earn His blessing. However, God designed the law to reveal sin and to drive sinners to Christ as their only hope of being saved.

#### A. The law was a schoolmaster (3:23, 24)

Paul informed his readers that “the scripture hath concluded all under sin” (Gal. 3:22). In other words, sin condemned every person to spiritual imprisonment. In verse 23 Paul used the same Greek word to describe how the law locked up, or “shut up,” all people. Sin and the law confined sinners to spiritual bondage. However, this confinement was intended to be temporary, until “the faith which should afterwards be revealed.” The law served God's purpose in a negative and temporary way. It was negative, for it could produce only condemnation. It did not have the power to produce spiritual life. It was temporary, for it was in effect only until faith came as a response to the death of Christ.

**READ:** Galatians 3:24.

In verse 24 Paul identified the law as our “schoolmaster.” In the Greek culture

the schoolmaster served as a disciplinarian. Usually he was an older slave charged with the responsibility of giving a boy moral training and strict supervision. Being on the receiving end of such discipline, a boy often felt desperate and restricted.

**ASK:** What was your strictest teacher like? Did you learn well from him or her? (Q3)

**ASK:** What are some limitations a teacher has when seeking to train his or her students? (Q4) *The teacher cannot change the student's heart or control the student's attitude and behavior.*

**ASK:** How do those limitations reflect the limitations of the law to make people better? (Q5) *The law, like the teacher, can only set a standard. Both are powerless to effect real change.*

Acting as a disciplinarian, the law confined people by showing them their sin at every turn. It led to despair. However, the law was only temporary, just as a "schoolmaster" supervised a boy only during the boy's childhood. When Christ came, the law was no longer needed. Christ fulfilled the demands of the law and died for sinners. Those who trust in Christ are free from the law and are able by the power of the Holy Spirit to meet the moral standards contained in the law.

**READ:** Romans 8:1–4; John 8:36; 1 Peter 1:18–20. **ASK:** To redeem someone is to pay the price of the person's freedom. What cannot redeem sinners? (Q6) *Silver and gold.*

**ASK:** What was required to redeem us? (Q7) *The blood of Christ.*

**ASK:** What characterized our Redeemer? (Q8) *He was the sinless, spotless lamb.*

**ASK:** How do we know Jesus' death on the cross was not a disastrous turn of events? (Q9) *He was foreordained to die for the world.*

## **B. Faith closed the school of law (3:25, 26)**

**READ:** Galatians 3:25.

Paul explained that since faith came, "we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (3:25). The law performed a necessary function in diagnosing the disease of sin. To that extent it was beneficial, but it could not provide a remedy for sin. Only faith in Christ's substitutionary death could bring spiritual life to sinners who deserved nothing but condemnation. Jesus Christ fulfilled the law and ended its tenure. The Judaizers were insisting on obedience to a law that Christ had made obsolete.

**ASK:** Does faith save us, or is it the means by which we receive salvation? Explain. (Q10) *Faith is the means by which we receive salvation. The blood of Christ procured our salvation, and God saves us by grace.*

**READ:** Galatians 3:26.

The law produced only the negative result of condemnation. Faith in Christ introduces believers to a family relationship. As Paul stated in verse 26, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” In addition, the law was addressed to the Jews, but God’s family is open to all people. Therefore, Paul addressed both the Jews and the Gentiles in Galatia, and said, “Ye are all the children of God.” Instead of producing condemnation, faith produces fellowship with God. In place of fear, Christians can love God as their Father.

The word “children” in Galatians 3:26 is actually the term “sons.” In the Greek culture this term applied to young men who had reached maturity and were recognized as legal heirs. A legally recognized son-heir would never revert to living under the rule of his schoolmaster. Similarly, Galatians who had become God’s sons by faith in Christ would be foolish to revert to the bondage of the law. Faith had released them from that bondage.

**ASK:** What has your standing as a child of God meant to you? (Q11)

**ASK:** As children of God, how might we increase our gratitude for membership in God’s family? (Q12) *Consider what we have been saved from, meditate on the glory of eternity with God, develop friendships with fellow children of God, meditate on Scriptures that detail the benefits of being in God’s family.*

### **C. In Christ is the promise (3:27–29)**

The churches of Galatia included both Jews and Gentiles. However, the two groups shared a genuine relationship with Christ. Paul wrote, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (3:27). “Baptized” here likely refers to two baptisms. In Spirit baptism, the Holy Spirit baptizes the new believer into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Spirit baptism is an unseen, spiritual reality. The outward sign of this identification with Christ is water baptism. Water baptism cannot save anyone, but it provides a visible testimony of what happened when the baptized person trusted in Christ as Savior.

**READ:** Galatians 3:28. **ASK:** What outward distinctions does being “in Christ” supersede? (Q13) *Nationality, station in life, gender.*

**ASK:** How could you encourage a believer who is discouraged because of his or her station in life? (Q14) *Remind the believer of the blessings of being in Christ, the best station in life!*

**ASK:** How should a believer’s standing “in Christ” affect his or her relationship with fellow believers? (Q15) *There ought to be a mutual love that looks beyond outward differences and focuses on the inward commonality of being in Christ.*

The Judaizers emphasized the distinctiveness of the Jews. In doing so they were adopting the standard values of the Jewish man, who daily thanked God that he was not a Gentile, a slave, or a woman. In Galatians 3:28 Paul argued pointedly that

in Christ all believers have the same standing. What Christians have in common in Christ far outweighs the differences that have historically divided humanity.

Paul explained in Galatians 3:16 that Abraham's "seed" referred ultimately to Christ, not to Abraham's physical descendants. In verse 27 he insisted that all genuine Christians have been baptized into Christ. In verse 29 he combined these two concepts and applied them to all the Christians in Galatia: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." All who come to Christ by faith, whether Jew or Gentile, are the seed of Abraham. Gentiles get to be part of the blessing God promised would come through Abraham to the families of the earth (Gen. 12:3).

## **II. Christ Led to Adoption in God's Family (Gal. 4:1–7)**

Although a chapter division separates 3:29 from 4:1, there is no break in the thought Paul was developing. He simply expanded it in 4:1–7 and proved that Christians are God's legal sons and heirs. Christ's redemption transformed sinners into God's sons.

### **A. The law imposed bondage (4:1–3)**

**READ:** Galatians 4:1–3.

In Galatians 4:1 and 2, Paul observed that a child who was under the discipline of tutors and governors lived just like a servant even though someday he would become an heir. The child looked forward to enjoying freedom and other privileges associated with the position of an adult son; however, during childhood he did not have any freedom.

Tutors were guardians.  
Governors were stewards.  
The guardian oversaw  
the child's person. The  
steward oversaw the prop-  
erty that the child would  
inherit someday.

This custodial arrangement, provided by the father, continued "until the time appointed of the father" (4:2). During this period, tutors and governors controlled the boy's actions and managed the property he would inherit. In a similar way, the law acted as a constraint upon the Jews in the period before Christ came. Paul wrote, "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world" (4:3). In God's purpose the law was good (Rom. 7:12), for it reflected God's holiness and caused humans to realize their sin. However, when people twisted the law into a way to earn righteousness, it held them in bondage.

### **B. Christ redeemed from the bondage of law (4:4, 5)**

**READ:** Galatians 4:4.

Just as a father set the time for his son to enter legally acknowledged adulthood, so God brought the rule of law to an end at a predetermined time in history. From the time of Moses, the law had regulated Jewish life, showing the Jews their utter inability to earn God's approval. However, in God's plan, the law was only a temporary arrangement. Therefore, Paul stated that "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law" (Gal. 4:4).

Paul presented two crucial elements in Christ's incarnation. First, he mentioned that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin—"made of a woman" (4:4). As the virgin-born Son of God, Jesus was truly human and, therefore, was able to be the

substitute for humanity on the cross. In addition, He was born into a Jewish family, so He lived under the law. Jesus fully kept the requirements of the law; therefore, He was qualified to be a righteous substitute for sinners.

**READ:** Galatians 4:5.

Paul mentioned a second essential element in Christ's incarnation. Christ came to earth "to redeem them that were under the law" (4:5). The law held people in spiritual bondage, because it condemned them as sinners. But the law could not save them from their sins. Only Christ's blood availed to release sinners from the bondage of sin and give them a standing before God as His adopted sons. The law could never match what Christ did. Therefore, the Judaizers and their followers were treading down a path to bondage and frustration. Their path was called legalism, the belief that the law was a necessary element in securing God's saving grace.

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 9. **ASK:** How might living like a legalist affect a believer? (Q16) (Records or reveal answers.) *The believer focuses on outward appearance, develops a shallow relationship with God, judges others mercilessly, lives with a proud heart, and tolerates "private" sins.*

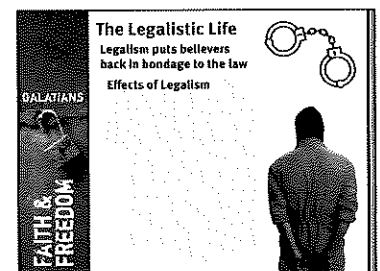
### C. In Christ is sonship (4:6, 7)

Paul referred to himself and Jews in general when he wrote, "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world" (4:3) and "that we might receive the adoption of sons" (4:5). Then addressing the Galatian Christians directly, he wrote, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (4:6). All the Galatian believers, both Jews and Gentiles, were sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles enjoyed the indwelling of the Holy Spirit after salvation.

**READ:** Galatians 4:7.

Paul communicated what it means to be God's son (4:7). In the first century culture, when a boy received the status of a son, he was no longer treated as a servant. There was a new relationship between the father and his child. The Judaizers were trying to persuade Christians to act as though they were still in submission to the law. For Christians the period of spiritual bondage was over for good. Furthermore, because the Christians had become God's sons, they were also His heirs.

The gospel far surpasses the law, for while the law condemns people as servants, grace gives the status and privileges of sons. The Galatians should have enjoyed their spiritual benefits instead of placing themselves under the restrictions and bondage the law imposed.



## MAKING IT PERSONAL

### Free in Christ

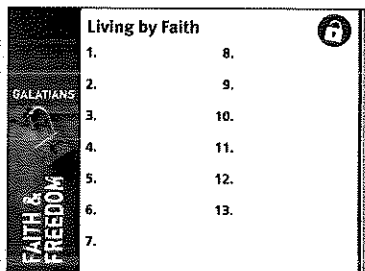
**ASK:** Do you see the Christian life as restrictive or freeing? Explain. (Q17)

**ASK:** How has this lesson helped you to see the benefits of life as a child of God? (Q18)

### Part of the Family

**ASK:** How would you describe the closeness of your relationship with your Heavenly Father? (Q19)

**ASK:** What will you do this week to build your relationship with your Heavenly Father? (Q20)



### Summary and Memory Verse

Use resource 1 to record a summary for this lesson: Appreciate membership in God's family.

Encourage your learners to memorize Galatians 4:6 and 7. Give them an opportunity to say the verse in class next week.