

Lesson 7

July 19, 2026

Children of God Through Faith: Christ makes us God's much-loved children.

THE LESSON OVERVIEW

The Apostle Paul continued his instructions on the nature of faith, Christian liberty, and sonship in Christ. To illustrate the transition from the Law to grace, Paul emphasizes that through faith in Jesus Christ, we are no longer slaves but adopted children of God and heirs to His promises. Paul urged the Galatians church to embrace the freedom they found in the Gospel. He then contrasted the covenants of Law and grace through the superiority of the promise fulfilled in Christ. This lesson is a profound reminder of the transformational power of identifying as children of God through faith in Christ.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The account of Abraham, involving Sarah, the freewoman, and Hagar, the bondwoman, is important to this lesson. This account is found in Genesis 16 and 21. Because of her infertility, Sarah told Abraham that he should father a child with her bondwoman, Hagar. This was not what God told Abraham to do, but he listened to Sarah and had a son with Hagar. However, Sarah became jealous of Hagar and told Abraham he had to send her and his son Ishmael, away. Again, Abraham listened to Sarah and sent Hagar and Ishmael into the wilderness of Beersheba. However, God heard Hagar's cry and provided for her and the boy.

THE LESSON OUTLINE

- 1. MADE GOD'S CHILDREN THROUGH FAITH: Galatians 3:26-4:7.**
 - A. Heirs of the Promise by Faith, (3:26-29)
 - B. Redeemed and Adopted by Christ, (4:1-7)
- 2. DO NOT ABANDON FAITH: Galatians 4:8-20.**
 - A. Paul's Example of Faithfulness, (8-15)
 - B. Paul Preaches the Truth, (16-20)
- 3. CHILDREN OF LAW AND FAITH CONTRASTED: Galatians 4:21-31.**
 - A. Two Women and One Promise, (21-26)
 - B. Christians Are Children of Promise, (27-31)

DISCUSSING THE LESSON

1. MADE GOD'S CHILDREN THROUGH FAITH: Galatians 3:26-4:7.

A. Heirs of the Promise by Faith, Galatians 3:26-29.

Going from the bondage of the Law to the liberating identity found in Christ is a radical shift. Paul emphasized themes of unity, inheritance, and spiritual maturity in this passage. In verse 26, he declared, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." The heart of Paul's message is that faith in God's grace, not adherence to the Mosaic Law, is the basis of our relationship with God, by placing our trust in Christ, we are adopted into God's family, transcending ethnic, social, and gender distinctions. This adoption is further illustrated in verse 27, which says that by being "baptized into Christ," we are clothed in Him. This imagery pictures us living with Christ as our covering and identity.

In verse 28, Paul proclaimed the spiritual equality found in Christ: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." This is an astounding declaration of unity within the body of Christ. It does not erase individual distinctions but rather nullifies the power of these distinctions to divide or determine one's standing before God. The Gospel fosters a new community grounded in faith. Through faith in Jesus, all Christians become Abraham's seed (offspring) and, therefore, "heirs according to the promise" (v. 29). This verse reinforces the idea that faith, not lineage or Law, is the basis of salvation.

B. Redeemed and Adopted by Christ, Galatians 4:1-7.

In chapter 4, Paul used an analogy to illustrate the Christian's journey from spiritual infancy under the Law to maturity in Christ. In verses 1-2, he compared an heir who is still a child to a slave, noting that though the child legally owns everything, they remain under guardianship until the appointed time. This metaphor reflects the Law's purpose as a temporary custodian, preparing God's people for Christ's coming. Verse 3 notes that as children, we were "under the elements of the world." For the Jewish Christians, the "elements" likely refer to basic principles or teachings, including the ceremonial laws and practices that governed Jewish life. For Gentiles, this could also encompass pagan rituals and philosophies. Both groups were enslaved to systems incapable of bringing true freedom or salvation.

The turning point comes in verses 4 and 5 with the arrival of Christ. Paul declared that at precisely the right time, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the Law." The phrase "fullness of time" indicates everything occurred according to God's sovereign timing in His redemptive plan. The incarnation of Jesus and His submission to the Law were necessary for Him to fulfill its demands perfectly and secure our redemption. Through our faith in this act, we are no longer slaves but are adopted as sons and daughters.

Paul explained that God sends the Spirit of His Son in the Christian's heart, enabling us to cry out, "Abba, Father" (v. 6). This intimate term for God signifies a profound relational shift. No longer distant or fearful, Christians now approach God with the confidence and affection of children calling out to a loving parent. The indwelling Holy Spirit serves as both the evidence and guarantee of this new relationship. Christians are no longer slaves but heirs of God "Through

Christ” (v. 7). This inheritance encompasses eternal life, communion with God, and participation in His kingdom.

Children have a special connection with their parents that no one else can replicate. When they call, the parents answer. When they visit, the door is always open. Parents show love and care to their children in ways that wouldn’t be the same for anyone else. Similarly, our relationship with God through faith in Jesus is one-of-a-kind. No other belief system offers this kind of closeness with God because, as Jesus said in John 14:6, no one can come to the Father except through Him. Through Jesus, we come to God not as strangers but as His children, sharing in the promises and blessings that come with being part of His family.

2. DO NOT ABANDON FAITH: Galatians 4:8-20.

A. Paul’s Example of Faithfulness, Galatians 4:8-15.

The Galatians were reminded of their former state of spiritual bondage when they worshipped false gods that were powerless to save them (v. 8). He contrasted this with their current standing as those who had come to know the true God – or rather, “known of God” (v. 9). Paul expressed concern that they were going into observing Jewish legalistic practices (“you observe days and months and years” v. 10 NKJV), which was like returning to their former enslavement in paganism. Paul’s tone was both pastoral and urgent as he appealed to their shared history and the transformation they experienced through the Gospel.

Paul was concerned that his hard work among the Galatian Christians would come to nothing if they were to embrace the practice of circumcision and follow the Jewish calendar. His statement “I have bestowed upon you labor in vain” (v. 11) refers to his past ministry among them, as well as the continuing results of that ministry, including the writing of this letter.

In the latter part of the passage, Paul reflected on the warm reception he received from the Galatians during his initial visit despite an affliction that he was dealing with. He commended their willingness to overlook his weakness and embrace him as a messenger of God. This recollection served as a poignant reminder of their earlier zeal and gratitude for the Gospel message. Paul’s words encouraged self-examination, urging them to return to that initial fervor and reject any teaching that undermines the sufficiency of Christ’s work. The passage challenges us to resist legalism and to remain steadfast in the grace and freedom offered through faith in Jesus.

B. Paul Preaches the Truth, Galatians 4:16-20.

Paul expressed a deep pastoral concern for the Galatian Christians. He asked them if he had become their “enemy” because he told them, “the Truth” (v. 16). Paul’s words remind us of the difficulty of maintaining relationships when correction is necessary. Yet, his unwavering commitment to the spiritual well-being of the Galatians revealed his genuine love for them. He contrasted his motives with those of the Judaizers, who sought to alienate the Galatians from Paul to gain their loyalty. Therefore, Paul emphasized the importance of discerning true spiritual leadership, which seeks the growth and freedom of others in Christ rather than personal gain or

control. Paul's concern was not his ego but the spiritual health of the Galatian Christians.

In the latter verses, Paul used the metaphor of childbirth to describe his anguish and longing for Christ to be fully formed in the Galatians. This vivid imagery conveyed both the depth of his concern and the life-changing nature of spiritual growth. His desire was not merely for external conformity to religious practices but for an internal, Christ-centered transformation. Paul's tone was both urgent and tender. He wished he could be present with them to better address their struggles. These verses reveal the sacrificial nature of true discipleship and the responsibility of spiritual leaders to labor tirelessly for the maturity of those they shepherd. Paul's plea encourages us to ensure that truth and love remain central in our pursuit of Christlikeness.

It's tough to watch people we've led to the Lord drift back to their old ways. It can make us want to throw up our hands and say, "Well, I tried!" But not Paul. When he heard the Galatian Christians were adding elements of Mosaic Law to the Gospel of grace, he didn't sit there shaking his head. He sent a letter that was equal parts theological correction, a heartfelt plea, and a pointed reminder of God's promises through Christ. The word surrender wasn't in Paul's vocabulary. Instead, he tackled the issue head-on, showing us that when people wander, we don't surrender them to the world; we fight for them with faith, truth, love, and maybe some righteous correction.

3. CHILDREN OF LAW AND FAITH CONTRASTED: Galatians 4:21-31.

A. Two Women and One Promise, Galatians 4:21-26.

Paul used the story of Abraham's sons, Ishmael and Isaac, to contrast the old covenant and the new covenant. Paul addressed those who desired to live under the Law, urging them to consider its implications. Ishmael was the son of a slave woman, Hagar. He was born "according to the flesh" (4:23a NKJV) – from impulses of human nature. Ishmael was sent away and received no part of his father's inheritance. Yet, God loved him, as He does all people, and made him into a great nation (Genesis 21:9-21).

Isaac was the son of Sarah. He was the son "the promise," and his mother was the "freewoman" (Galatians 4:23b). Isaac was the only son that fulfilled the promise God made to Abraham. This promise placed him in the ancestral line of the Messiah.

The covenant at Sinai (the old covenant) was represented by Hagar (v. 24), who was a slave. Like Hagar was in bondage to Sarah, so the Jews were in bondage to the Law and, in the days of Paul, to Rome. The new covenant in Jesus Christ is represented by Sarah. Her children are people of faith, including Jews and Gentiles, who live in freedom from the Law. All her descendants are "free" and share the inheritance (v. 26). Paul referred to Jerusalem as being "above" and "the mother of us all." In verse 26, Jerusalem symbolizes the church, which is heavenly in origin. All believers are children of God.

B. Christians Are Children of Promise, Galatians 4:27-31.

Citing Isaiah 54:1, Paul emphasized the miraculous nature of God's promise, likening the barren woman to Sarah, whose offspring were born not through human effort but through divine intervention (v. 27). This served as a metaphor for the new covenant, which is based on faith and grace rather than adherence to the Mosaic Law. By contrasting the children of the free woman (Sarah) with those of the slave woman (Hagar), Paul underscored that Christians are heirs of the promise, liberated from the bondage of legalism and called to live in the freedom of God's grace.

Paul concluded this section by urging the Galatians to recognize their identity as children of the free woman and to reject any return to spiritual slavery. He reminded them that, like Isaac, they were "children of promise" (v. 28), born through the Spirit rather than human effort. The reference to Ishmael's persecution of Isaac (v. 29) serves as a warning against those who seek to impose legalistic burdens on Christians. Paul called for a decisive separation from such influences, echoing Sarah's demand to "cast out" Hagar and her son (v. 30). Salvation is found in Christ alone, apart from the Law, and we are invited to live as heirs of God's eternal promise.

The Cambridge Bible Commentary states, "Our liberty in the Gospel of Christ [means] freedom from the curse of the Law, from the yoke of ritual observances, from the bondage of sin and Satan, from the burden of God's eternal conscience.

Paul's statement that people who adhered to elements of the Mosaic Law are the spiritual offspring of Hagar and Ishmael, rather than Sarah and Isaac, must have been shocking to those who thought they were "improving" upon the Gospel of grace by adding selected parts of the Law. Paul said all who accepted grace by faith, even Gentiles, were heirs of the promises to Abraham, and those who refused this grace were the outcasts. Sometimes, it takes a shocking revelation to get our attention and turn us in the right direction.

CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

We should never forsake grace by trying to improve upon what God has done through Christ. Instead, we participate in the work of Christ in us through trust and obedience.

MINISTRY IN ACTION

The church should make every effort to follow up with members who have been missing from the fold. Paul pursued believers like a shepherd seeking that last sheep and so should we.

Paul's Methodology: Right Doctrine and Right Living.

There is a methodology in the Apostle Paul's letters in the New Testament. It is that right doctrine is the foundation of and the motive for right living.

The Apostle Paul knew the churches of Galatia had to hold fast to the right doctrine to continue in right living. Therefore, the first four chapters of his letter to the church of Galatia are focused on right doctrine, and the last two chapters are focused on right living based on right doctrine.

When we commit our lives to Christ and experience regeneration (the new birth, becoming a new creation in Christ), the Holy Spirit imparts to us love for God and Christ and a sincere desire to follow Christ and obey God.

Still, we must learn how to live as Christians. Because we have a God-given conscience, we can know intuitively (by conscience) that we ought to do good, but we do not know intuitively what is required of us to live as Christians.

We learn how to live as Christians by hearing the Gospel preached and taught, by reading and studying the Bible, by listening to and observing other Christians, by our own experiences in Christlike living, and in all of this by prayer that the Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth and that we will obey the truth.

Because living a Christlike life is a lifelong learning experience, we must have right doctrine (teaching true to Holy Scripture) to know how to live right (as followers of Jesus Christ). Orthodoxy is essential for orthopraxis.

When right doctrine is neglected, or worse, willfully abandoned by individual believers in Christ, by preachers and teachers, or by the church generally, the foundation of and the motive for right (Christlike) living are taken away.

As Christians, each of us has a sacred responsibility to God and a moral and ethical duty to others to learn what is right and to do what is right.

WORKSHEET

The Heavenly Father

When you were growing up, what did you call your father?

The most common names used in the U.S. are “Dad” and “Daddy.” Some call their dad “Father.” Other names are Papa, Pa, and Pop.

In Spanish, some popular names for father are Papa, Jefe, Papi, and Padre.

If we are God’s children, what should we call God? The Bible refers to God as “Father” in various passages. List something each passage reveals about God as Father:

- **Deuteronomy 32:6**
- **Luke 11:2**
- **John 3:16**
- **Matthew 7:11**
- **Mark 14:36**