

Re-Created to Live in Harmony

Bible Background • [GALATIANS 3:26-4:7](#)

Printed Text • [GALATIANS 3:26-4:7](#)

Devotional Reading • [COLOSSIANS 3:12-17](#)

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: DISCOVER the unity of Christians based on the saving work of Christ and the Holy Spirit; APPRECIATE that, through Christ, we are all one in the church; and EXAMINE ourselves for prejudiced attitudes against other believers.



Keith had been working with Edward for a couple of weeks when he noticed Edward in the break room reading his Bible. They began a deep discussion about Christ and enjoyed each other's fellowship. Soon they began to meet once a week at lunch to study the Word together, and Edward invited Keith to his church. Once Keith looked the church up on the Web, he noticed some things he didn't agree with in their statement of faith. It seemed that they approved of practices that he and his pastor looked down on. It wasn't that they were sins, but he knew he disagreed with them. He wondered if he could continue to be friends with Edward and whether Edward was a bad influence on him.

Instead of deciding to not go to Edward's church service, Keith decided to press through. Surprisingly, he enjoyed the service. The people he met at the door were all very pleasant. Worship was very high-tech and included videos and praise dancers. The message was about the greatness of Jesus Christ and the power of the Gospel. Although Keith didn't agree with much that went on in the service, he knew that his fellowship with Edward centered on Christ. They were brothers because of His blood and not because of their particular worship styles.

How do you strive to maintain unity in the body of Christ as you interact with brothers and sisters who think, look, or act differently?

Keep in Mind

“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” ([Galatians 3:28](#)).

KJV

Galatians 3:26 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.

4:1 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.

NLT

Galatians 3:26 For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

27 And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on the character of Christ, like putting on new clothes.

28 There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

4:1 Think of it this way. If a father dies and leaves an inheritance for his young children, those children are not much better off than slaves until they grow up, even though they actually own everything their father had.

2 They have to obey their guardians until they reach whatever age their father set.

3 And that's the way it was with us before Christ came. We were like children; we were slaves to the basic spiritual principles of this world.

4 But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law.

5 God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children.

6 And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father."

7 Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

The People, Places, and Times

Paul. At one time known as Saul (Hebrew name meaning desired), Paul was born around the same time as Jesus Christ in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia. His father was Jewish but a Roman citizen. There is not much mention of his mother. However, we can read about a sister and nephew and other relatives in Acts and Romans.

As Paul was growing up, he learned to make tents from goats' haircloth, a common trade in Tarsus. After finishing his basic schooling, Saul was sent to school for law when he was about thirteen years old. For some time after the Pentecost, Stephen, who was one of the seven deacons, preached about Jesus, stirring some of the Jewish leaders (because some were following the disciples). Saul and others persecuted Stephen and those that followed Christ. Saul had an encounter with Jesus on the Damascus road and was converted. Taking on the name Paul (Greek for small or little), he spent his life preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Galatia. Located in the central region of Asia Minor, Galatia has been referred to as Gallia of the East. In Roman times, Galatia was an ethnically mixed province due to its location in the empire.

Background

The nation of Israel was known as God's children in the Old Testament. Judaism spoke of being clothed by the Spirit. In Paul's time, occasionally Gentiles would convert to Judaism, which included a ritual baptism and circumcision of males. Followers of Jesus included Jews who followed Torah tradition, as well as Gentiles from other cults of the Roman Empire. Galatians reflects, more strongly than most New Testament texts, on the conflict among followers of Jesus regarding whether Gentiles needed to follow all of the Torah or not, with Paul clearly falling on the side of Gentile freedom from such Torah commands such as circumcision and temple sacrifices.

In addition, some Greco-Roman cults did not honor social divisions because they were expensive, and could exclude everyone but the rich. However, the earlier Christians were resistant to division and formed bridges between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jewish people were known as Abraham's seed, or offspring, with an inheritance to the promise.

Under the Roman law, minors were considered slaves. A minor had to have a legal guardian. If the minor's father was dead, the guardian was chosen from the father's will. If the will was not available, the responsibility went to the nearest male relative. Galatians were freed from slavery or needed a guardian. God adopted them and made them His children, with a powerful inheritance.

At-A-Glance

1. One in Christ (**Galatians 3:26–29**)
2. The World in Bondage (4:1–3)
3. God Delivered the World (vv. 4–7)

In Depth

1. One in Christ (Galatians 3:26–29**)**

Faith in Jesus Christ allows Christians to experience the Gospel's benefits because we are no longer slaves or servants but now God's actual children. Accepting Christ Jesus as Lord and Savior changes the perspective of being compelled to perform certain rituals. We believe in Him by faith for justification and salvation, making us the children of God. Baptism allows us to put on Christ Jesus, an outward expression of an inner change. Just as He died for us and rose again, we must also die to sin.

When we believe and receive Christ, God honors our faith and clothes us with His righteousness. Now that we are clothed with Jesus' purity, God no longer sees us without seeing His Son, and He accepts us. This makes us one in Christ Jesus.

Believers in Christ are also Abraham's seed. Christ is the seed of Abraham, and being a Christian makes a person part of that seed, as well as an heir to the promise of Abraham. We are not just heirs, but also joint heirs to Christ Jesus (**Romans 8:15–17**)!

2. The World in Bondage (4:1–3)

An heir has to wait for an appointed time to receive an inheritance. He (usually a male) would have the security of knowing that he was freeborn and due to receive his father's inheritance. The heir still has to be submissive to those over him until the set time comes. The comparison is made with us, as Christians. Before Christ, we were just like slaves, being controlled by the dominating forces of this world.

It was previously difficult to approach God before Christ, because knowledge about who God is was very limited. The available knowledge had to be accompanied by the discipline and guidance of the Law. When Christ came, He delivered us from the Law, giving us a parent-child relationship with God. Thus, we are not slaves under the Law anymore but children of God, in Christ Jesus.

3. God Delivered the World (vv. 4–7)

An earthly father can choose when his child is an adult eligible to receive the inheritance set aside for him. God did the same thing; He chose the time to send His Son to fulfill His work.

God sent His Son for two reasons. The first was to redeem and set free those under the Law. The second reason was to give believers all rights and privileges of being God's children. By faith, God adopts believers through Christ, making them His children. God did not stop there; He also sent the Spirit of His Son. Every believer has the Spirit inside, bearing witness that they are part of God's holy family. God made it personal for believers, allowing them to refer to Him as Abba Father, indicating an intimacy with His children.

Paul drew this to a conclusion, proclaiming Galatians were not slaves anymore but now children and heirs. The difference in verses 6 and 7 brings out the personal relationship the believer has with the Father through Christ.

Search the Scriptures

1. Why does God choose faith in Christ Jesus as the means of making us His children ([Galatians 3:26](#))?
2. How would you evaluate whether the Spirit of God was in your heart (4:6)?

Discuss the Meaning

We should celebrate our commonalities when we encounter others in the faith. God has chosen to make us His children by faith, and this is worth celebrating. At the same time, how do we recognize and celebrate our unique ethnic identities?

Lesson in Our Society

Being adopted by God as His child comes with great responsibility. As with the inheritance we receive, we also have a responsibility and commitment to live according to the way our Father has set for us. We are new creatures in Christ, and the way we live our lives should line up accordingly.

Make It Happen

Ask yourself: Do I treat every believer in the faith as my brother and sister in Christ? If I do, how can I express love in a greater way? If not, try to make a conscious effort to ask God for help to see His children the way He does and to treat them as such.

More Light on the Text

Galatians 3:26–4:7

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

This verse expresses Paul's compassionate and pastoral heart. Though correct in his presentation of the Gospel, he says harsh things about the Galatians' failure to understand and learn the message of justification by faith. This is because some Jewish leaders of the church tried (and succeeded) in getting the Gentile Galatians to circumcise their males, which Paul thought unnecessary for participation in the promise of Christ (see 2:11–21). Paul reminds the Galatians,

however, that despite their failings, they are now “the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.” Paul teaches that we are made acceptable to God not because we fully understand the doctrine, but because we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

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

Although this is Paul’s only reference to Christian baptism in this letter to the Galatians, the reference is significant. The phrase “have been baptized into Christ” is Paul’s way of calling out those who have accepted God’s free grace through faith. The Greek word for “put on” (*enduo*, **en-DOO-oh**) means to be clothed, wear, or dress. Their water baptism, being a symbolic expression of their acceptance of Christ, affirms that they have indeed “clothed” themselves with 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.

Paul uses three couplets to represent inequality. The first being ethnic: Jew/Greek; second, economic: bound/free; and third, gender: male/female. He states that all who, by faith, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ become one with each other. In a culture where Jews were a minority but viewed themselves as the children of God, free-born Gentiles who joined the church were in a precarious position. For non-Jews who had abandoned their official cults, slaves who had no rights, and women who were second-class citizens, Paul’s claim of unity is a radical statement. It was good news for the Gentiles, slaves, and women who joined the family of faith.

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

With this point, Paul brings the reasoning from the last few verses back to the broader point he has been working through for the whole chapter, explaining how the Gentiles are welcomed into God’s family through faith rather than works. Paul wants his Gentile readers to know that their relationship with Christ makes them Abraham’s seed and qualifies them to be joint and equal heirs to the blessings outlined in God’s promise to Abraham.

4:1 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.

Paul recaps his comments in [Galatians 3:23–29](#), where he presented the Galatians as being “heirs according to the promise.” Although the Jews were heirs to the promise, some of them were held captive to the discipline of the Law, and treated like children living under the watchful, caring, and protective eye of a steward. This, Paul contended, was necessary because Jesus Christ had not yet come ([Galatians 3:23](#)). But after the coming of Christ (v. 3:25), believers were “no longer under” the Law. After the Incarnation, those who believe in Christ were now “sons of God,” free to live their lives “unto God” (v. 2:19), “by the faith of the Son of God, who ... gave himself for” them (v. 2:20).

Paul makes the point that although an heir has certain privileges and rights that a slave does not, as a child, the heir is still under the supervision of guardians and tutors. The heir’s subjection to

the tutors and governors is only “until the time appointed of the father.” In other words, the heir will receive inheritance, but not until the day set by the father. This imagery recalls Paul’s comment in 3:23, and anticipates his comment in 4:4. With great literary skill, Paul uses the legal language governing the inheritance law of his day to set the stage for his statements in verses 3–5.

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

In the next three verses, Paul applies the illustration set forth in verses 1–2 to help explain the Galatians’ experience. The question persists, however, about who the pronoun “we” refers to. Is this a reference to Jews or Gentiles, or both—including Paul? Given Paul’s message of inclusiveness and his conviction that Christ came to rescue all people from enslavement to “the elements of the world” (of which the Law was one enslaving element), it is reasonable to believe that “we” refers to Jews, Gentiles, and Paul.

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

The “fullness of time” recalls the “time appointed of the father” in Paul’s illustration about the inheritance in verse 2. This analogy shows that where the Galatians were concerned, their inheritance was in the form of God sending “forth his Son.” God’s Son was human in that He was “made of a woman” and a Jew in that He was “made under the law.” The Greek word for “made” used here is *ginomai* (**GHEE-no-my**), which can also be translated “born” (cf. NLT, NIV, ESV, etc.). In other words, Jesus was born of a woman, and born under the Law. Jesus, God’s Son, came into the world like any other Jewish male child. But He came into the world with a mission.

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

The mission of God’s Son was to “redeem” or to emancipate from slavery to the Law those who were heirs to the promise, in order that they might receive the inheritance, namely “the adoption of sons.” Paul uses adoption language here as a way of including the Gentiles who were not born Jews, in the inheritance that God has to offer. This brings Paul closer to the conclusion of his analogy. He has one more thing to say.

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

Before making his concluding statement, Paul reminds the Galatians that receiving their adoption as God’s children resulted also in His sending into their hearts “the Spirit of his Son.” Not only did the sending of God’s Spirit confirm the Galatians’ new status and freedom as His children, but it also empowered them to use their freedom responsibly.

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

It is obvious from Paul's reasoning that he views each individual Galatian as being in a privileged position. The phrase "thou art" is singular, which indicates that Paul wants to direct his comment to each individual Galatian. It is as if he is saying, "You, you as an individual, are no longer a servant, but a child." The KJV continues, "...and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." This translation is debatable primarily because the available Greek manuscripts do not all agree. (Some say "through Christ," some say "through God," others have minor variations on the phrasing.) However, the most commonly used Greek New Testament and the earliest manuscripts (one as early as the second century AD) read "through God." This translation makes the Galatians' status as heirs a work of God's grace, which supports Paul's message that salvation is not by works of the Law, but by God's grace freely given through faith in Jesus Christ.

One of the interesting contrasts that Paul makes throughout this section in Galatians is that of son versus servant. The familial language is very significant. The privileges of a son versus those of a servant help to illustrate the difference between having a relationship with God through the efficacious death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and trying to be righteous by obeying the Law. The difference is quite clear. The death of Christ and saving faith brings a believer into the family of God as His adopted children who have an inheritance. As servants, we were not part of the family and did not have any privileges. Why go back to such a system? Through Christ, we are heirs! Through Christ, we cry to God, "Abba, Father."

Say It Correctly

Abba. **AH**-bah.
Differeth. di-**FIR**-ith.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

The Spirit Made You a Believer
([Galatians 3:1-5](#))

TUESDAY

All Peoples are Blessed Through Abraham
([Genesis 22:15-18](#))

WEDNESDAY

Jesus Fulfills the Promise to Abraham
([Galatians 3:15-18](#))

THURSDAY

Baptized into One Body
([1 Corinthians 12:12-18](#))

FRIDAY

Know that You are Children of God
([1 John 2:28-3:3](#))

SATURDAY

Serve in the Name of Christ
([Colossians 3:12-17](#))

SUNDAY

Changed by Christ to Live in Harmony
([Galatians 3:26-4:7](#))