

## Lesson 15 – Galatians 3:29-4:7

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### Review/Introduction

Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Paul is writing to the Galatian churches who are in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. “Grace” is God’s sovereign, omnipotent, supernatural, unilateral intervention in the most hopeless and helpless situations with actions that only He can perform and with the results that only He can produce, all for His glory. The true gospel is all about grace “not as a result of works, so that no one may boast”.

Paul is correcting the heresy of the Judaizers who are disturbing the Galatians with a different, distorted gospel, which is really not another since there is only one gospel of Christ.

Paul has presented the authentication of the Gospel through the source (God) and its power to change lives (persecutor/murderer to preacher). That same authentication is true for the follower of Christ today.

In the doctrinal section of the letter starting in chapter three, Paul defends justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. The Galatians had received the Holy Spirit but by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone and not through works of the law. Relying on the law cannot bring about Spirit baptism.

The OT clearly teaches that justification is by faith alone. Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness prior to receiving circumcision and before the law existed.

The OT also shows that those who rely on the law for justification are under a curse. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Abraham was saved from his sin through faith prior to the coming of the law. The means of salvation did not change from faith to law (or faith plus law). The priority of promise over works of the law did not change.

If promise is superior to law, then what is the purpose of the law? Law cannot save, but was given to take us by the hand and led us to Christ. The law shows us our need for a savior.

Paul has explored the things that the law cannot do: give the Holy Spirit (3:1-5), give righteousness (3:6-9), justify (3:10-12), change grace through faith (3:15-18). He is now showing the power of the gospel of grace to do things that the law cannot do. These are authenticating evidences of the superiority of the gospel of grace over law. He has shown the power of justification by faith to eliminate distinctions, to unify people who are different in the body of Christ. There are no real cultural, ethnic, racial, past religious, financial, or social distinctions within the body of Christ. Neither should there be in practice.

Today, look at the power of the gospel to make the elect Abraham’s spiritual descendants, heirs according to promise.

## Paul's defense of justification by faith – The power of justification to make heirs (3:39-4:7)

### 1. Abraham's spiritual descendants (3:29)

<sup>29</sup>And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.

<sup>29</sup>And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise. (ESV)

Paul has just talked about being a son of God through faith in Christ. Every true believer has been baptized into Christ (united with Christ) and baptized into the body of Christ (united with all other believers). We have been clothed with Christ. We are all one in Christ Jesus.

<sup>25</sup>But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. <sup>26</sup>For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>27</sup>For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:25-28)

“And if” or better “since” you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. If you have surrendered your life to Christ, then you “belong” to Christ. You “are” Christ's. You are Christ's possession. You are united with Him and His body.

Paul has used “Christ” 17 times up to this point in the epistle and “Jesus” 11 times. His emphasis on Christ is noteworthy. Justification is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Paul is making it clear that justification is not by law in the repetitive use of the Lord's name and title.

If you are clothed with Christ, then you are Abraham's spiritual descendent. There are physical promises to the physical descendants of Abraham that his spiritual descendants do not possess (Genesis 15:18; 17:8). But as Abraham's spiritual descendants we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies.

<sup>3</sup>Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ**, (Ephesians 1:3)

Paul has laid out those blessings already here in chapter 3.

<sup>8</sup>The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, *saying*, “All the nations will be blessed in you.” <sup>9</sup>So then **those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham**, the believer. (Galatians 3:8-9)

<sup>14</sup>in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:14)

<sup>22</sup>But the Scripture has shut up everyone under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (Galatians 3:22)

“Promise” is used nine times in chapter 3. As we have seen, Paul is emphasizing the preeminence of promise over law.

“Heir” is one who receives something as a possession or a beneficiary. The usage applies primarily to the realm of spiritual inheritance.

### ❖ **How many Spiritual blessings that you possess can you name?**

*All Scripture are from the NASB '95 Update unless noted.*

*Most word studies are from preceptaustin.org, blueletterbible.org, and biblehub.com*

## 2. Under the law (4:1-3)

<sup>1</sup>Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, <sup>2</sup>but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. <sup>3</sup>So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

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<sup>1</sup>I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, <sup>2</sup>but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. <sup>3</sup>In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. (ESV)

Paul now illustrates the position of the elect under law. All people are kept in custody under law. Jews through the law of Moses. Gentiles through a violated conscience.

<sup>14</sup>For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, <sup>15</sup>in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, <sup>16</sup>on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Romans 2:14-16)

Both the Jews and Gentiles at Galatia would have understood the position of an underage heir. In both cultures there were coming of age times when the child would no longer be considered a child, but an adult. In both cultures, at that set time, the children would put away childish things and take on responsibility for their actions. Paul refers to this in 1 Corinthians.

<sup>11</sup>When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; **when I became a man, I did away with childish things.** (1 Corinthians 13:11)

The heir as a child will own everything someday, but also in reality, owns it as a child. The child just has not yet come into full possession of it. The child is under guardians and managers until the time set by the father, one of which was the “tutor” or child-leader. The child did not differ at all from a slave. The child had masters just like slaves have masters.

So also, we, while we were children, were held in bondage. Before coming to regeneration, we were slaves to sin. Law, whether from Moses or conscience, showed us that we were slaves to sin. The Scriptures are clear that:

All are sinful:

<sup>23</sup>for **all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,** (Romans 3:23)

The unregenerate person’s heart is described as wicked:

<sup>5</sup>Then the LORD saw that the **wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.** (Genesis 6:5)

<sup>9</sup>“The **heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick;** Who can understand it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

The unregenerate person is dead in their trespasses and sins:

<sup>1</sup>And **you were dead in your trespasses and sins**, <sup>2</sup>in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. <sup>3</sup>Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

The unregenerate person loves the darkness and hates the light:

<sup>19</sup>This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and **men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil**. <sup>20</sup>For **everyone who does evil hates the Light**, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. (John 3:19-20)

The unregenerate person will not come to Christ of his own volition:

<sup>44</sup>"**No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him**; and I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:44)

<sup>65</sup>And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that **no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father**." (John 6:65)

The unregenerate person's mind is blinded and is held captive by Satan:

<sup>4</sup>in whose case the god of this world has **blinded the minds of the unbelieving** so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

<sup>25</sup>with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, <sup>26</sup>and they may come to their senses *and escape* from the snare of the devil, **having been held captive by him to do his will**. (2 Timothy 2:25-26)

The unregenerate person is a slave to sin:

<sup>33</sup>Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, **everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin**. (John 8:33)

<sup>16</sup>Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are **slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death**, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? <sup>17</sup>But thanks be to God that though **you were slaves of sin**, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, <sup>18</sup>and having **been freed from sin**, you became slaves of righteousness. <sup>9</sup>I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. <sup>20</sup>For when you were **slaves of sin**, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup>Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. <sup>22</sup>But now having been **freed from sin** and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. <sup>23</sup>For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:16-23)

The unregenerate person is ...:

<sup>3</sup>For we also once were **foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.** (Titus 3:3)

- ❖ **Do you fully understand the depths that the corruption of sin extends in your life? How grateful does that make you for justification? How dependent does that make you for sanctification?**

But here it appears that Paul has in view a different enslavement of being “held in bondage under the elemental things of the world”. “Elemental things of the world” describes an elementary or fundamental principle in a subject or discipline. It refers to the first principles or basic building blocks of something.

Bible scholars disagree on what Paul is referring to here as the “elemental things of the world”. However, Paul uses the same phrase in 4:9 which refers to the works of the law as these “elemental things” to which the unsaved are enslaved in the futile attempt to try and work themselves to God.

<sup>9</sup>But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? (Galatians 4:9)

We are redeemed from the curse of the law, adopted as sons, Abraham’s spiritual descendants, heirs according to promise, no longer slaves of sin, and freed from the futile self-effort of the works of the law (law of Moses or conscience).

- ❖ **What does your gratitude regarding your freedom from sin and elemental things move you to do?**

### 3. Redeemed from law to be a son and heir (4:4-7)

<sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, <sup>5</sup>so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup>Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” <sup>7</sup>Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

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<sup>4</sup>But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup>And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (ESV)

Fullness of the time is when the Father sent the Son. Elsewhere, Paul says it was the “proper time”.

<sup>1</sup>Paul, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, <sup>2</sup>in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, <sup>3</sup>**but at the proper time manifested**, *even* His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior, (Titus 1:1-3)

Why was it during the Roman Empire that Jesus came? Why not Egypt or Greece or Persia or England? God is sovereign over all things. God does not make mistakes and He does nothing by random chance. When God considered the time absolutely right, He sent Jesus into the world to redeem us. The coming of Jesus was accomplished by God at the perfect place and time for maximum glory for Himself and benefit of those whom He would save (the elect).

❖ **What does the truth of God’s glory and our sanctifying good produce in you?**

“Sent forth” means sent on a mission. The Father sent the Son on a mission to be the Savior of the world.

<sup>13</sup>By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup>We have seen and testify that **the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.** (1 John 4:13-14)

Paul clearly states both the deity and humanity of Jesus the Christ. Jesus, God the Son, was born under the Law. He was a Jew and subject to the Old Covenant laws, He Himself being the fulfillment of the law.

<sup>17</sup>“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; **I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.** <sup>18</sup>For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. (Matthew 5:17-18)

<sup>4</sup>For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Romans 10:4)

“Redeem” means literally to buy out of the market place. Paul already said that Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.

<sup>13</sup>Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE”— <sup>14</sup>in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:13-14)

The believer is adopted into God’s family as a son. Adoption is God’s work in making us a permanent part of His family in a privileged place of inheritance. This place of closeness and privilege is only through faith, not law.

The Father picked the perfect time to send forth the Son so that all who believe in Him would receive the promise of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>14</sup>in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Galatians 3:14)

“Abba” is the English transliteration of the Greek transliteration of the Aramaic word for father. It conveys a warm, intimate and very personal relationship. It can be translated “daddy” or “papa.” The word is used two other times in the NT. Each time it is coupled with “father” referring to God the Father.

<sup>36</sup>And He was saying, “**Abba! Father!** All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.” (Mark 14:36)

<sup>15</sup>For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of **adoption as sons** by which we cry out, “**Abba! Father!**” (Romans 8:15)

In Romans, Paul says that believers cry out “Abba! Father!”. Here in Galatians, Paul says, “God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” Both are true as Paul continues to say in Romans 8.

<sup>15</sup>For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup>**The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,** <sup>17</sup>and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him* so that we may also be glorified with *Him*. (Romans 8:15-17)

We are adopted sons and therefore no longer a slave to sin, the law, nor futile effort to overcome the law with good works. And since a son then we are an heir to the blessings of salvation.

❖ **How does this knowledge change you?**

**Conclusion**

The Galatians were in danger of abandoning justification by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Paul has explored the things the law cannot do, shown why the law was given, and is now showing the power of promise to do things that the law cannot do. He is giving more authenticating evidences of the superiority of promise (grace) over law. Justification by faith makes the elect Abraham’s spiritual descendants, heirs of every spiritual blessings according to promise.

**Additional Study**

1. Read Galatians once this week a chapter at a time (one chapter a day for six days).
2. Today’s Questions
  - Spend some time praying and thanking God for His amazing work of salvation by grace through faith in Christ; thank Jesus for His sacrifice for you; thank the Spirit for convicting you of your sin and progressively sanctifying you.
  - Review the Scriptures on “total depravity” in the study. Do you view yourself as being evil, completely and utterly sinful? Or do you think, I am not that bad? If you think you are “not that bad”, to whom are you comparing yourself – God or other people?
  - Read the following verses. Think about your assurance of salvation and how confident you are that you are truly saved. If you do not have firm confidence, then what might be the causes? (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24)