

February 20, 2022

“Inheriting Abraham’s Promise”  
Lesson 3 of Unit

Galatians 3:15-18  
Galatians 4:1-7

### **Intro**

Most of us have a will, the document that instructs our families about what is to be done with our estate once we die. It is legally binding; it is very difficult, though not entirely impossible, to make changes to a will once a person has died.

Wills were present in Paul’s day, and further back in time than that as well. One of the ideas that Paul develops in today’s passage is that the promises God made to Abraham are essentially God’s “will”. Paul makes the claim that God’s “will” to Abraham isn’t changed or eliminated by the laws of Moses, which came after God made His promises to Abraham. As with our wills, once God had made His, it could be added to, but not changed in its essentials.

In last week’s lesson, Paul develops his arguments against the Judaizers (Jews who say people must convert to Judaism before they can become Christians. The passage from last week was Gal. 3:1-14, the verses directly before the first part of today’s lesson.

### **Read Galatians 3:15-18**

1. vs. 15: In Gal. 3:1-14, Paul used examples from OT Scriptures to refute the Judaizers

In vs. 15, Paul refers to something from “everyday life”,

This is a things commonly known and understood

Paul refers to a covenant

We tend to think of the binding agreements between God and man

The word can also to describe human documents, like wills

Paul says that a human covenant has limitations

It cannot be “set aside” or added to once it has been put into effect

He is establishing the human model in use to show how God’s covenant works the same

2. vs. 16: Paul refers to the promises made to Abraham and to his “seed”

Seed is one / singular, not many

The promise says that Abraham will be father to a great nation (many people)

Paul notes that the deed refers to just one specific person—the Christ

Paul is again using OT scriptures the Judaizers would accept / agree with

Genesis was written by Moses; both Paul and the Judaizers accept it

It’s also important to note that the Judaizers aren’t opponents to Christ

They have also accepted Jesus as the promised Messiah

They have become Christians as well

There is no disagreement about Jesus’ resurrection or deity

The disagreement is about the necessity of keeping the Law

3. vs. 17: Paul is very good at developing logical points in order  
 In vs. 1, he notes that everyone accepts wills as legal and binding  
 In vs. 2, he notes that promises were made to Abraham, one of which was that the Christ would come through his line  
 In vs. 3, he brings up the gap between the promise and the law  
     God's promise to Abraham came 430 years before Moses got the law  
 If wills (God's promises here) cannot be altered or broken...  
     Then the law does not do away with the promises to Abraham  
     The covenant promises to Abraham are still in effect, in Paul's day and ours
4. vs. 18: Paul concludes this line of thinking with a comparison:  
 "If the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise"  
 The inheritance (God's promise) can only have one foundation: law or promise  
 Paul is saying that the promise is not only first, but of greater value, than the law  
     God gave His promise to Abraham; He did not give Abraham a law  
     God always keeps His promises (2 Cor. 1:20)  
 Our share in Abraham's promise also comes through inheritance, not law  
     An heir has more claim than an employee or a slave/servant  
     A relationship based on law is not as strong as one based on family ties  
 Note: the logical thought here would be: "If the promise system is superior to the law system, why did God ever give the law to Moses??" Paul answers this in Gal. 3:19-29, which is not a part of our study today.

### **Read Galatians 4:1-7**

5. vs. 1: Paul begins this section with another commonly-held idea:  
 Children and slaves are treated the same  
     Neither is independent; both must obey the father  
 Paul notes that this is true of even the eldest son, who will eventually inherit all
6. vs. 2: A child, even the oldest son, is subject to others  
 His father, and here, guardians and trustees  
     The father in a wealthy household likely hired people to have control over his son  
 Roman law in Paul's time says a son is an adult at age 14  
     It is not known if the Galatians also used this guideline  
 This verse says that the son is subject to his father "until the time set by his father"
7. vs. 3: Paul makes the connection now between the common world and the spiritual world  
 The law is like the father in vs. 2, who rules over those under him  
 If we are under the law, it controls us; we are in slavery to it  
 Even if the law is good and beneficial (see 3:24), it still puts us in subjection  
 Paul then mentions the "basic principles of the world"  
     He means the spiritual forces that work against God and Godly people  
     To be under its control is to be a slave to it; Paul is referencing sin here

8. vs. 4: Paul now connects Jesus to all he has been developing  
God made a promise to Abraham that his “seed” would come  
Jesus is the fulfillment of that promise  
He came at the right time, “when the time had fully come”

Jesus was born of a woman and born under the law  
These are both very important  
Jesus was born fully human—“of a woman”  
He has our nature, grew up like we did

9. vs. 5: This verse completes the thought begun in vs. 4  
“God sent His Son...to redeem those under law...”  
If a slave (as in slave to sin—see vs. 4) is redeemed, it means his freedom has been bought  
For Christians, we haven’t just been redeemed—we’ve been adopted as His children

Jesus came as a Jew to set free the Jews—“those under law”  
He was born under the law, meaning He had to live under its restrictions  
Because Jesus lived perfectly, He met the requirements of the law  
By doing so, He could then offer Himself as a replacement for us  
We couldn’t pay for our sins because of our imperfections  
Jesus could pay for our sins because of his perfectness

10. vs. 6: One of the big benefits of being adopted by God shows up here  
God “sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts”  
We have been given the Holy Spirit  
This gift confirms God’s adoption of us as His children  
All of God’s plans for the salvation of man are shown here  
God sent Jesus to pay the price for our sins  
Jesus lived perfectly, died for our sins, and rose again, defeating death  
This death allowed the Holy Spirit to come into our hearts / lives  
The Holy Spirit helps us to act like God’s children  
Because of the Spirit’s presence, we call out to God, “Abba, Father”  
“Abba” is a term which essentially means, “Daddy!”  
This shows how close we can feel, are meant to feel, as children adopted into God’s family

11. vs. 7: This verse describes our progression towards God  
We start out as slaves, serving the law and sin with no hope for rescue or freedom  
Christ’s death allowed us to be adopted as sons and daughters to God  
As His children, we are then legal and legitimate heirs of God’s kingdom  
The first thing we inherit is the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence!

Application: We have all, at one time or another, experienced either oppression or lack of control in our lives. It could have happened in our jobs, or in a relationship, or with government policies and agencies. We haven't been exactly slaves, however. Take any of those previous situations, and magnify it to this point: to never, ever, being in control and to always being oppressed. That's what the life of a slave was like in Paul's day. Their day-to-day life was without hope for the future, even with a "good" slave master.

Now imagine that slave being freed and adopted by the best father. Always even-tempered, never harsh, always concerned, always seeking what's best for you. This is our transition from a life of slavery to sin to a life with God the Father. He has given us three tremendous gifts as His children: 1) His sinless Son as a sacrifice for our sins; 2) His Spirit as a teacher and comforter to our souls; and 3) the inheritance of eternal life with Him. Under these conditions, who wouldn't cry out, "Abba, Father!"?

Prayer: Father God, thank You that the promise You made to Abraham was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Thank you that His death freed us from being bound to and by the law; it freed us to live in and by Your grace. Thank You for adopting us and making us heirs with Jesus. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.