



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Galatians 3:26-4:7

English Standard Version

February 5, 2017

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, February 5, 2017**, is from **Galatians 3:26-4:7**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(Galatians 3:26) for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.

Paul faced the problem where some Jewish Christians were dividing the Church in Galatia by teaching that in order to be saved one must believe in Jesus as the way of salvation and also obey the ceremonial laws of Moses; emphasizing that Greek (or Gentile) Christians were not truly saved or right with God until they submitted to circumcision and became like the Jewish Christians. Paul replied that they were all sons of God, true Christians, through faith in Jesus Christ alone and not also by obeying the ceremonial laws of Moses.

(Galatians 3:27) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

“True Christians” or sons (and daughters) of God are those who have faith in Jesus who said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20). Paul and Peter preached the same gospel: “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ Peter replied, ‘Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 2:37-38).

Neither preached that true Christians needed to also obey the ceremonial laws of Moses; such as, circumcision and the food laws that would separate true Christians from one another; even though Paul had to correct Peter in practice (see Galatians 2:11-16). For true Christians, after they have been baptized (buried with Christ and raised again to new life in Christ, see Romans 6:4), they now look and live morally and spiritually as Christ taught: they have clothed themselves with Christ. They have taken the yoke of Christ upon them to do the will of His Father in heaven as He did, to follow Christ in faith. Faith in Christ and obedience to Christ because we love and trust Him becomes everything to them, not faith and obeying the ceremonies of the Jews who insisted on obeying the ceremonial laws of Moses to be a true child of God.

(Galatians 3:28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Racial tensions were high between Jews and Greeks. Many Jews called Gentiles “dogs.” Many Greeks called everyone else “barbarians.” The Bible insists that in the Church of Jesus Christ there should be no racial divisions because all followers of Jesus Christ are children of God. Similarly, a person may be a slave or a master, but in the Church of Jesus Christ both are equal: the slave should not feel inferior to the master or a master feel superior to a slave. In the eyes of Christ and the Church, slaves and masters who follow Jesus Christ as Lord are equally children of God. In Jewish religious ritual, the men thanked God that they had not been born a woman, but in the Church men and women were considered equally children of God, with neither male nor female being superior to the other, but one in Christ Jesus.

(Galatians 3:29) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

The Jewish Christians argued that unless the Gentile Christians followed the laws of Moses as they did that they were not Abraham’s children or entitled to the promises God made to Abraham. Paul argued that Jesus Christ was the seed of Abraham, the promised Messiah, and because the Gentile Christians belonged to Christ they would receive all the benefits of saving faith in Christ and were indeed Abraham’s children without the requirement of obeying the laws of Moses. On the Mount of Transfiguration, God the Father told the disciples to listen to Jesus, not to Moses and Elijah also (Matthew 17:5).

(Galatians 4:1) 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,

Paul continues his example by illustrating the implications of a person’s will with respect to a minor child (which he began in Galatians 3:15). A slave is told what to do

and what he can and cannot do, and he must obey or be punished. A slave has no freedoms or independence. Paul argues that a “minor child” (one not old enough to make responsible decisions for himself, or one not recognized as an adult prepared to manage his property or inheritance) will someday take actual possession of the property of his deceased father (as such, he is the owner of his deceased father’s property, but not its manager, to do with as he likes). Until the minor child is old enough to manage his property (hopefully wisely), he must follow the rules of his guardians, and be rewarded or punished based on his compliance.

(Galatians 4:2) but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.

A will respecting a minor child will take effect when his father (or his parents) has died. The will of his father may state that he is the owner of his deceased father’s property, but also set certain restrictions. The father’s will may state that his child will remain under the authority of guardians or trustees and not come into possession of his property until the minor child is of a certain age or has fulfilled certain requirements set by the father (for example, has completed school or shown responsibility by completing other tasks). The father hopes and plans for his child to mature to the point that he does not need the laws of guardians and trustees, but has gained the wisdom to do what is right and best for all concerned with the property he has inherited.

(Galatians 4:3) In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

While we were minors (before believing in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and being freed by Him) as a result of our sins, we were enslaved to “the elemental spirits of the world.” God did not enslave us. By disobeying, we enslaved ourselves to habitually repeating the same sins and even worse sins. The laws of God would help us learn right from wrong and live while enslaved, but the laws of God could not free us from our slavery to sin and the demonic powers that tempted us, nor could the laws of God empower or enable us to live wisely and rightly with consistency. Rather, the laws of God showed us that we needed more than laws, we also needed a Savior to save us from slavery to sin and the elemental spirits. We needed freedom from slavery, but we also we needed the Holy Spirit of God within us to help us use our freedom wisely and rightly.

(Galatians 4:4) But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,

God decided the right time to send the offspring, Jesus the Messiah, that He had promised to send. God sent the Messiah, born of the virgin Mary, as His offspring in the

line of Abraham and David (their offspring). He sent Jesus when He decided that believers in Jesus Christ would no longer need the guardians of the rules of Moses (the regulations, the festivals, the sacrifices of Moses' government, which was subservient to Roman rule). By believing in Jesus, even though under Roman rule, His children could live wisely and love God and others as God their Father intended all people to live.

(Galatians 4:5) to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Jesus came and fulfilled the law of Moses under which He was born. He obeyed the law of God perfectly. He became the perfect sacrifice (that the sacrifices God instituted through Moses pointed toward). He made the supreme sacrifice for our sins. He died a substitutionary death for us. He suffered and died in our place to redeem believers and save us from the eternal consequences our disobedience deserves. He rose again from the dead and freed us from our slavery to the elemental spirits of the world that tempt us to sin. By His death and resurrection, He has adopted believers as children of God; we are adopted into God's family and will receive an inheritance as His children.

(Galatians 4:6) And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Jesus is the only begotten Son of God; believers in Him are adopted children of God. When we believe God's promises and believe in Jesus, when we believe God the Father sent Jesus as He promised to accomplish His blessed will for us, then we become adopted children of God our heavenly Father and we receive an inheritance as His children. In addition to forgiveness and cleansing from sin, receiving the Holy Spirit into our hearts is the first part of the inheritance that God gives us as His children. The Holy Spirit is similar to a down payment that assures us of our future inheritance. God graciously sends the Holy Spirit into our hearts as a consequence of our believing in Jesus as the Messiah, our Lord and Savior. He is a gift and not a possession we have earned because we have obeyed the laws of God (because we have not obeyed the laws of God: we have disobeyed them). The Holy Spirit inspires us to call upon God as our heavenly "Abba! (Daddy) Father!" Those filled with the Holy Spirit call God their "Father," and this is a sign they are adopted children of God.

(Galatians 4:7) So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Now, as a result of believing God, the Holy Spirit in our hearts frees us from slavery to sin and the elemental spirits of the world. We now have the power of God within us to overcome temptations and take the way of escape that Jesus shows us when we are

tempted. We have the power of God to say “NO!” to sin and temptation and to do what we know to be the right and loving thing in every situation. We now have the Spirit of God to lead us according to the Word of God, the Bible, that the Holy Spirit also helps us interpret and understand. We no longer need the rules of Moses’ government in order to obey God’s moral law (to love God and others). We now love God and others in the power of the Holy Spirit, including Jews and Gentiles within the circle of God’s love.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. How does God adopt a child into His family? How can we be adopted into the family of God?
2. What are some of the gifts a child of God will inherit from their heavenly Father?
3. Give some reasons why the inheritance of God’s children cannot come to them from the law?
4. Why is being under the law similar to being a minor child under a guardian or trustee?
5. In these verses, what major blessing or gift does Paul say the Spirit of God will bring to believers when He comes into their hearts? Why is this gift of the Holy Spirit so meaningful and valuable?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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Contact: P.O. Box 1052, Edmond, Oklahoma, 73083 and lgp@theiblf.com.