

Lessons from Galatians

Righteousness by Faith Series



Lesson 4—The Covenants and the Law

Galatians 4:1-31

- I. **Introduction:** *The Apostle begins explaining about the two Covenant relationships to God in Chapter 4. This helps us to better understand our relationship to God and to His law as we explore these Covenants and their application to our lives. This brings out more of the truths contained in the 3rd chapter of Galatians. Let us understand the practical application of these spiritual truths to our lives, and how righteousness by faith may be experienced in our lives!*
- II. **The experience of a child (v.1-7)**
 - a. *(v.1-3) The experience of a child, though he may be the heir of all things, is that his life is governed and ruled by all the masters above him. He is merely told what to do! Everyone of age and authority is a master over him. His life is not that much different from being a slave. Even so we, living as children were in “bondage” to worldly elements—that is the sinful struggles of this evil world (i.e. Romans 7:14-25).*
 - b. *(v.4-7) We were set as slaves, or bondservants. Christ came to “redeem those who were under the law” (v.5)—that is, (1) under the condemnation of the law (i.e. Romans 8:1), and (2) also, for some, under the system of law as a means of salvation—as some thought of things like this. Christ came to “adopt” us into His heavenly family as sons and daughters by faith (v.5)! We are to be the sons and daughters of Christ, adopted by His righteous Spirit and not set under the bondage of sin, guilt, or a legalistic experience, but rather, one of liberty and righteousness through this adoption! **See also Romans 8:1-4,11-16.** Paul is re-stating the same exact truths here in Galatians that he spoke more at length about in Romans 8. We are to “live by the Spirit” and to not be in debt or bondage to sin, or a guilt-filled, condemnation filled lifestyle which has no release! We may obtain our victories in Christ! (Romans 7:24,25). We may live by faith in the Son of God, being covered by His righteousness, not our own faulty works. And therefore, in Him, we may have victories and advance in holiness by the power of His Spirit!*
 - c. *(v.4) Christ was born “under the law.” He was under all the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament, including circumcision. He was “under the law,” even the Moral commands as well, and he kept them perfectly! He had perfect righteousness! Therefore, He can cover us with that saving righteousness of His, and set us free from sin and death!*
 - d. *(v.5) “...under the law.” That is, under the condemnation of the law, or trying to live the law as if you save ourselves. We are not “under the law” now, but “under grace.” We used to be condemned by the Law, but now God’s saving grace has come!*
 - e. *(v.7) We are “no longer a slave” but a son! Christ Jesus has “set us free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). He came “in the likeness of sinful flesh” that He might “condemn sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3). Christ Jesus overcame, where all men had failed! He has given us the adoption of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:15). And “if the son will set you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:32-36; Luke 4:18).*

- f. **“When the fullness of the time had come...”** (v.4). At just the right time, the time appointed by God the Father, Christ came (v.2)! Christ came to “confirm” the new covenant of His blood with many! (See Daniel 9:27). In the verses of Daniel we can see the part of the written law that was going to “cease” at the cross—that is, the “sacrifices and oblation.” Christ came at exactly the right time (Mark 1:15).
- III. What are the “weak and beggarly elements”? (v.8-11)**
- a. *Trying to obtain salvation by our own works is a weak and beggarly way to do things. It cannot be successful. Another “weak and beggarly” way of doing things is to go back to the old system of types and figures when actually, Jesus Christ, the real Lamb of God has come and fulfilled the ceremonial laws. We no longer need to keep those old ordinances like the feast days which had to do with the sanctuary and with offerings, and also circumcision (v.9,10; Colossians 2:13-17). Do not go merely to a system of law or a round of ceremony as if that might save you! Have faith in Christ for your righteousness and salvation.*
- IV. The physical infirmity or weakness of Paul (v.12-16)** *It is believed that Paul perhaps had an eye problem and this was his weakness or infirmity which he wished God would take from him (See also 2 Corinthians 12:7-9). (At his conversion he did experience blindness, but then his sight was restored-Acts 9).*
- V. Paul yearned to help these Galatian churches and to not see them lost from their first faith (v.17-20).** *Like a parent he had great concern for them—even as a spiritual parent! He longed to see Christ formed in them (ref. Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 3:17,18).*
- VI. The two covenants (v.21-26)** *The covenants are illustrated by the two children of Abraham. The covenant at Sinai is considered the “bondwoman,” but the covenant of Promise or faith given to Abraham is considered the “freewoman.” The two children of Abraham are Ishmael and Isaac. Isaac was the promised son, promised by God himself, obtained by God’s power working, and not by human works! The birth of Isaac was the miraculous fulfillment of God’s promise...something that was humanly impossible to do. The thing about Ishmael is that this birth was not based on God’s promise or faith in it. This was built on man’s promises, thoughts, and efforts. It was not what God designed. Some people have put themselves under a “bondwoman” experience. They think to take their own righteousness into their own hands. They do not trust in the work of Jesus Christ and His righteousness for salvation, but rather their own works. They have not followed or lived by the promises of God, and they are in bondage! At Sinai the people had promised to “do all that the law” told them (Exodus 19:8; 24:7). However, they did not fulfill their end of this deal, as was not possible in their own strength. God found fault “with them” (Hebrews 8:6-10). They did not continue in His covenant! The new covenant in Christ’s blood also includes the righteous Ten Commandments of God...but the promise is that God will write these things in our minds and hearts through Christ (Heb. 8:10). Not just in stone.*
- VII. The children of the freewoman vs. the children of the bondwoman (v.27-31)** *We, as believers in Christ by faith, are to be the children of the promise. The children of the “bondwoman” desire to persecute and bring us under their bondage—a system of legal works for self-righteousness—and a number of outdated ceremonial laws as well! But, those things are to be cast out!*

Taking it Home: Which covenant do you find yourself living under today? Will you approach God through Christ’s righteousness and not your own? _____