

Galatians, Chapter Three, Lesson Four

HEIRS THROUGH FAITH Galatians 3:23-29

STIMULATE

** At the close of last week's Bible study, we asked the question, "If you "hold fast" to God's truth and live your life according to His wisdom, how will you live every day?" What was the answer to that question?

You will live every day being "Happy" in your faith because God has accomplished your salvation and given you the faith to believe in His Son! (Proverbs 3:18)

** You may recall that it was our common goal to strive to live each day as joyful, thankful, full of praise people, who are "Happy in Faith". How did you do this past week?

Through the many trials of our life (and the trials of those around us) we should see the faithfulness of our God and rejoice in His sufficient grace!

MOTIVATE

** Today, we will be concluding the first half of Paul's letter to the Galatians. As we do, let me ask you a question, do you know your ancestry? What does your family tree look like and how should it impact your ability to live for Christ? Let's look at the passage for today together and learn the answer. Please join me in Galatians 3:23-29 and we will see how we became "Heirs through Faith".

Read passage (V.23-25) (V.26-29)

Opening Prayer

Heirs through Faith

INVESTIGATE

V.23 ** Did Abraham have faith in God?

Of course he did! We have been learning all along that God reckoned Abraham's faith as righteousness, which is why Paul calls him "Abraham, the believer" back in verse nine of this chapter. (Galatians 3:9)

** Did God do that before the giving of the Law?

Yes, centuries after God recognized Abraham's faith (645 years to be exact) and reckoned it to him as righteousness, God gave the Law to Moses.

Just a footnote on the timing of the giving of the Law, "...the 430 years (V.17) refers to the time elapsed between God's last statement of the Abrahamic covenant and His giving of the Law to Moses. The Lord repeated the promise to Abraham's son Isaac (Genesis 26:24) and then to his grandson Jacob (Genesis 28:15). The Law came 645 years after Abraham, but 215 years later God repeated the Abrahamic covenant to Jacob, exactly 430 years prior to the Mosaic covenant at Sinai". [John MacArthur Commentary on Galatians, Pg. 85]

** Then if Abraham had faith in God 645 years before the Law, why does Paul say "before faith came" we were under the Law?

He is referring specifically to what we saw last week, that is the faith that is "in Jesus Christ".
(cf. V.22, and from this week - V.26)

** Well, Paul is saying that before people put their faith in Jesus Christ for salvation, we were kept in "custody under the Law". What does that phrase mean?

The word custody [phroureo] means lit. "a guard, or to guard". Paul is saying that people were in total subjection to the Law, found guilty as sinners, and imprisoned with no way out!

** What effect did this "custody" have on someone's ability to place their faith in the coming Messiah?

They were "shut up to the faith" - while under the heavy burden of keeping the Law, they could not see God's offer of salvation by grace through faith.

** Was that despairing position for the human race to continue forever? Would we ever come to understand the faith that is available through Jesus Christ?

Yes, praise God, it "was later to be revealed".
Paul spoke volumes on this - cf. Romans 16:25-26, Ephesians 3:1-6
and Colossians 1:26-27.

V.24 ** Knowing that faith in Jesus Christ was "later to be revealed" is obvious from our perspective today, but let's back up to those who lived under the Law. What was the Law supposed to do for them?

It was to lead them to Christ!

** Having already seen the Law as a guard over humanity, what new view or role does Paul add to our understanding of the Law?

It was to "...become our tutor..." [paidagogos] which means "a trainer of boys". Greek and Roman families would use tutors to supervise the children on behalf of the parents. It was their job to train them in obedience, make sure they did their school lessons, and even to scold or discipline as they felt it to be necessary.

** Do you suppose these tutors ruled over the children throughout the course of their lives, even when they became adults?

No, quite the contrary, once the job of raising the children was completed, the child (now an adult) would have authority over the tutor!

** What then, was the goal of the tutelage of the Law?

"...that we may be justified by faith." The Law was given to lead us to Christ, because we know that we cannot keep the perfect Law of God. In repentance, we turn to Christ for forgiveness and ask Him to justify us by our faith in Him. cf. Galatians 2:16 and Romans 3:20

Paul illustrates this point in Romans 7:7-13 and shows us the real villain, let's see it together.
Read passage - (V.7-8) (V.9-11) (V.12-13)

V.25 ** Now back in Galatians 3:25, what impact does the coming of faith in Jesus Christ have on our relationship to the Law?

"...we are no longer under" its tutelage!

** Borrowing from the tutorial practices of the day, what are some of the implications of that statement?

We are no longer held down by the Law, we are now "adults" who can live in accordance with the saving truth we have learned in Jesus Christ! (Galatians 5:1)

V.26 ** Ok, if we are no longer under this tutor, what have we become in the eyes of God?

"...you are all sons of God..." How about that for ancestry! We ought to be very thankful for the fact that God has made us His very own children through faith in Jesus Christ! From beginning to end, the New Testament is replete with references to this marvelous truth! Here are just a few examples:

Matthew 5:9 "peacemakers...sons of God"

John 1:12 "received Him...become children"

Romans 8:16 "The Spirit...bears witness"

Galatians 4:5 "receive the adoption as sons."

1John 3:1 "called children of God"

Revelation 21:6-7 "I will be his God and he will be My son"

** These are all tremendous statements, but let's not forget how they came to pass. How was all of this accomplished?

"...through faith in Christ Jesus." It is hard to imagine why anyone would reject such a wonderful offer to become a child of God, and yet the world around us is dying and going to hell for the lack of understanding this simple truth!

V.27 ** What two fold description does Paul offer of the "sons of God"?

1) They "were baptized into Christ"

2) They "have clothed [themselves] with Christ"

** Is there any water in this verse?

No, it is dry! Paul is saying that they had been immersed into the body and work of Christ by their faith in Him. cf. Romans 6:3, 1Corinthians 10:1-2

** What would be wrong with telling these Galatians they had been saved by going through water baptism, and then placed into Christ?

That would be another form of "works salvation", not at all unlike the Judaizers who were saying, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved". (Acts 15:1)

** What did Paul mean when he said they "...have clothed [themselves] with Christ"?

He was reiterating the truth stated earlier in Galatians 2:20, "...it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God...", and he was saying that the same was true of these Galatians believers! cf. Romans 13:13-14

V.28 ** What impact does this new identity as the "sons of God" have on the diversity of believers in the world?

Paul says, "...for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

** How many different "type" comparisons of believers does Paul mention in this verse?

1) Jew/Greek 2) slave/free man 3) male/female

In the world of the Pharisees (and Judaizers), they loved to divide by these same classes. Of course we know of the separation maintained by the Jews from the Gentiles, but they also maintained a division between servants and masters, as well as men and women. Paul may have been referring to the daily common prayer of a Jewish man of that day. It went like this, "I thank God that you have not made me a Gentile, a slave, or a woman". Jesus taught about this unloving, separatist viewpoint, which showed its ugly head in the prayer of the Pharisee. We see our Lord's view of that sin in Luke 18:9-14.

** Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, how does Paul's analysis of a Christian differ from that of the Pharisee's.

Again, "...you are all one in Christ Jesus"! That is why he urged us to be "diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace". (Ephesians 4:3)

V.29 ** What impact does belonging to Christ make upon our ancestry?

If you have been born-again, purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ and belong to Him, "...then you are Abraham's offspring..." Remember what John the Baptist said in Matthew 3:9, "...God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham"!

** What is beneficial about being Abraham's offspring?

We too, are "heirs according to promise". With that statement, we are placed in wonderful company. cf. Romans 8:17, James 2:5

EXTRICATE

** As you look back over our passage for today, how has it been a blessing to you? For which truths are you thankful?

- 1) I was not raised under the Law (V.23)
- 2) I was justified by faith in Christ (V.24)
- 3) I am taught by Christ, not the tutor (V.25)
- 4) I am a child of God (V.26)
- 5) I walk "clothed" in Christ (V.27)
- 6) I have union with all believers (V.28)
- 7) I am a joint heir with Jesus Christ (V.29)

DELINEATE

** What sequence of events does this passage show us, which takes the lost sinner to salvation?

- 1) The Law shows them they are sinners.
- 2) They are justified by grace through faith.
- 3) They are made into one body.
- 4) They inherit the kingdom with Jesus Christ.

EVALUATE

** Knowing that your ancestry goes back to "Abraham, the believer", what impact should that godly heritage have on your ability to live for Christ?

I have been forgiven so much and been given so much in Jesus Christ, that I must live up to the pattern of faithfulness which has been set down by all of those who have gone before me. Like my Father, Who is Holy, I too must be Holy! (cf. 2Corinthians 7:1)

ACTIVATE

** This entire third chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians has focused on our salvation by grace through faith. That miraculous and free gift must not be tread under foot by our callous and sinful disregard for His Word. If we have learned that we came to salvation by "Hearing with Faith"; and that God alone made us "Holy by Faith"; and that we should live each day "Happy in Faith"; and finally be holy like our Father in heaven who made us "Heirs through Faith"; then truly we have been changed.

May you go from this study walking in devotion to Jesus Christ, and worshipping Him in spirit and truth!

Closing prayer