

Teaching Plan  
EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: September 23, 2018

Lesson Title: "True Heirs"

Lesson Passage: Galatians 3:23-4:7

ABOUT THIS LESSON

When Paul wrote the Galatian letter, he was deeply concerned over the report that believers in Galatia were turning away from the true gospel and following false teachers who were insisting that, to be saved, one must observe the laws and customs of Judaism in addition to believing in Jesus as the Messiah. To be a Christian, they said, one must obey the law of Moses as well as receive God's grace through Christ. In the lesson passage, Paul is speaking against that heresy and argues that faith in Christ is the all-sufficient means of salvation.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Understand the main problem that Paul seems to be addressing in Galatians. (2) Explain the purpose of the law in relation to grace.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

*Read this comment by C. S. Lewis: "There is nothing indulgent about the Moral Law. It is as hard as nails. It tells you to do the straight thing and it does not seem to care how painful, or dangerous or difficult it is to do...It is after you have realised that there is a real Moral Law, and a Power behind the law, and that you have broken that law and put yourself wrong with that Power--it is after this that Christianity begins to talk." Then say: In Paul's Letter to the Galatians, Christianity is talking. In this letter, Paul is telling us what to do about it when we realize just how wrong with God we are.*

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. *Describe the heretical teaching that Paul is dealing with in his Galatian letter (see "ABOUT THIS LESSON" above).*

2. *Point out that, in Gal. 3:15-18, Paul is arguing that the way of faith is superior to the way of the Law. Summarize his argument: Abraham was set right with God through faith. (Read Heb. 11:8.) Faith was the basis of the covenant between God and Abraham, and that covenant was ratified 430 years before the Law was given to Moses (Gal. 3:17); so the Law had nothing to do with Abraham's right standing before God. But there's another thing. Once a covenant has been ratified, it cannot be changed. Therefore, the Law, which came later, could never change the covenant of faith which put Abraham in a right relationship with God. Explain Paul's reference to the singular "seed" (i. e., offspring, descendant) in v. 16: God's promises were made not to a great many people, but to Abraham and to a single individual in his lineage, Jesus Christ. So, we must enter into Abraham's inheritance not by obeying the Law, but through faith in Christ (v. 18).*

3. Suggest that Paul's thought in Gal. 3:19-22 might be stated like this: What, then, was the purpose of the Law? It was given in addition to the covenant to show what wrong-doing is. That is to say, it was given to define the real nature of sin and to show how hopeless it is for one to ever try to obey the will of God in every respect. ILLUSTRATION: Sisyphus was a legendary king of Corinth who was condemned eternally to rolling a heavy rock repeatedly up a hill in Hades only to have it roll down again each time it neared the top. The person who attempts to gain God's favor by obeying every nuance of the Law is in a situation just that hopeless; though he might almost succeed, he can never quite make it. This sense of hopelessness, Paul maintains, should finally drive us to Christ, our only hope.

4. Explain the argument Paul is making in Gal. 3:23-26: (1) The word in v. 24 translated "schoolmaster" (KJV) or "custodian" (RSV) is the Greek term *paidagogus*, from which we get our English word "pedagogue." The *paidagogus* was a slave who was put in charge of a boy's discipline and moral instruction. (This is why the NIV has simply, "the law was put in charge to lead us ..."). The *paidagogus* led the boy to school, then brought him back home when his instruction was over for the day. He was responsible for keeping the boy out of trouble and away from bad companions. (2) Paul is saying that the law was like a "pedagogue" in that it guarded and restricted men (*note "kept under restraint" in v. 23*), creating in them a longing for the liberty that they would eventually find in Christ. (3) But now, in Christ ("now that faith has come") they no longer need the disciplining of the law (the "pedagogue") because they have become full-grown sons of God through faith (v. 26).

5. Next, call attention to Paul's continuing argument in Gal. 4:4-7): (1) "The fulness of time" (v. 4, KJV) means "the right time according to God's schedule." "The time God had decided upon" conveys the meaning. (2) "God sent forth his Son" reflects the language of Jn. 3:16, "he gave his only begotten Son." Of course, "into the world" is implied. (3) "Born of woman" stresses the incarnation, the truth that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14). Jesus was God-Man (*refer to Phil. 2:7-8*). (4) "Born under the law" means "he was born into a society that had the law." In other words, Jesus was a Jew. (5) The purpose of His coming is spelled out in v. 5--"that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Under Roman law, a man who had no children could adopt a slave youth, making him his son and heir. Christ is God's Son by nature; we are sons adopted by grace.) (6) The evidence that believers are sons of God is found in Gal. 4:6. ("Abba, Father" is an intimate expression. It is the way a small child might address his "Daddy.") (7) "You are no longer a slave" (4:7) means "the law no longer holds you captive."

#### CLOSING THE LESSON

Quote the old gospel song, "Once for All": "Free from the law, O happy condition, Jesus hath bled, and there is remission; Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall, Grace hath redeemed us once for all."

Lucien Coleman P.O. Box 2951 Weatherford TX 76086 682-262-1312