

Sunday, March 29, 2026

Galatians 3-4:7

Promise, Faith, & the Family of Abraham

Lesson Goal

Students will understand that God's story has always been about promise and faith, not performance, and that through Jesus, Gentiles are welcomed fully into the family of Abraham.

Main Idea

The law had a purpose, but it was never the point. The point was always the promise of God, and that promise is fulfilled in Jesus.

Alright guys, Galatians 3 is one of those chapters where Paul is still fired up. He is not calming down. In fact, he opens with, "You foolish Galatians!"

That is not exactly a warm pastoral hug.

Paul is upset because he believes they are in danger of ruining the gospel. They started with faith, they experienced the Spirit by faith, they suffered for faith, and now they are being tempted to turn the whole thing into something else.

Paul's question is simple:

Why would you start with grace and then try to finish with performance?

Discussion

Ask:

- Why do people often start something one way and then drift into something else?
- Why is it easy to begin with trust but end up relying on performance?

Section 1: “You Foolish Galatians” (Galatians 3:1–5)

Paul asks them:

Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law or by believing what you heard?

That is the whole issue.

Not, “Did you hear about God by the law?”

Not, “Did you learn religious habits by the law?”

But, “How did you receive the Spirit?”

And the obvious answer is: **by faith**.

These Galatians are not Jews. They are Gentile believers, the kind of people talked about as the *theosabes*, the God-fearers. They are being tempted to convert to Judaism, to take on the markers of Jewish identity, because they think that is how they will finally belong.

Paul says, “Why would you do that? Your entire story so far has been a story of faith.”

Teaching Point

Paul reminds them to look at their own experience. They did not begin with performance. They began with faith.

Discussion

Ask:

- Why does Paul point them back to their own experience with God?
- Why do people sometimes forget how God first met them?

Section 2: Suffering and the Temptation to Convert

Paul also mentions their suffering. Why were they suffering? At least two reasons.

First, they were suffering religious pressure in Galatia. This was a place shaped by strict Jewish communities, heavily influenced by the school of Shammai. If these Gentile believers embraced Paul's gospel of grace and inclusion, they would face real resistance.

Second, they were suffering political pressure from Rome. If the larger Jewish community did not accept them, then they were not protected by the Jewish exception. That meant emperor worship could be demanded of them, and refusing that could mean punishment or even death.

So their temptation to convert was not random.

It made sense.

If they converted, life could get easier.

More acceptance.

More safety.

Less pressure.

Paul says, "If you do that, then all your suffering for the gospel would be emptied of its meaning."

Teaching Point

Sometimes the temptation to distort the gospel does not come from rebellion.

Sometimes it comes from exhaustion, fear, and the desire for safety.

Discussion

Ask:

- Why do suffering and pressure make compromise more tempting?
- Where do people today feel pressure to adjust the truth so life will be easier?

Section 3: Abraham as the Example (Galatians 3:6–9)

Then Paul brings in Abraham.

“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

This is where Paul leans into a classic Hillel-style argument. Abraham was justified by faith before he was circumcised.

That matters.

Because circumcision comes later.

Abraham was already declared righteous before he ever carried that covenant sign.

So if Abraham was justified by trust before circumcision, then justification cannot come from circumcision or from the works that mark Jewish identity.

Paul pushes it even further.

He says the gospel was announced in advance to Abraham when God said, “All nations will be blessed through you.”

That means Paul sees this inclusion of the Gentiles not as some backup plan, but as something embedded in the story from the beginning.

Teaching Point

God’s story did not begin with rules.
It began with promise.

And Abraham's place in the family of God began with trust.

Discussion

Ask:

- Why is Abraham such a powerful example for Paul to use here?
- Why does it matter that Abraham was justified before circumcision?

Section 4: Children of Abraham

This is where Paul gets radical.

In Jewish thought, there were categories. Let's highlights three:

- Brothers
- Children of Abraham
- Theosabes, the God-fearing Gentiles

If a Gentile wanted to become a true child of Abraham, they had to fully convert. They had to take on Torah and receive circumcision.

But Paul says a Gentile with faith is adopted into Abraham's family.

That is huge.

He is not just saying Gentiles can hang around the edges.

He is saying they belong.

Not as second-class people.

Not as distant cousins.

Not as tolerated outsiders.

They are full members of the family through faith.

Teaching Point

Faith, not ethnicity or conversion, is the marker of belonging in Abraham's family.

Discussion

Ask:

- Why would this have sounded so shocking in Paul's day?
- What are modern ways people still act like some believers are "more inside" than others?

Section 5: The Curse and the Works of the Law (Galatians 3:10–14)

Then Paul says something that can sound confusing if we move too fast.

He says all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse.

That does not mean the law itself is bad.

It means if you are relying on the works of the law for your justification, you place yourself under the crushing weight of trying to secure righteousness through performance.

Paul quotes Deuteronomy to make this point.

If your hope is in perfect law-keeping, then you live under the cloud of knowing you will fail.

That is the curse.

Not because God's law is evil, but because human beings cannot carry the burden of self-justification.

Then Paul says Christ redeemed us from that curse.

Jesus stepped into that place and exposed the whole faulty system of trying to find righteousness through identity markers and performance.

Teaching Point

The curse is not Torah itself.

The curse is trying to find your righteousness by carrying what you were never meant to carry.

Discussion

Ask:

- Why is performance-based religion so exhausting?
- What are some ways people today still try to justify themselves?

Section 6: Faithfulness, Not Rule-Keeping as Identity

Paul then brings in Habakkuk.

“The righteous will live by faith.”

This is not just “belief” in an abstract sense. It is *emunah*, faithfulness, trust lived out.

Paul is using a rabbinic move here, connecting texts to show that the law was not given as the source of justification. It was given to teach people how to live faithfully.

That is a big difference.

The law is not the place you go to earn your place.
The law is a way of learning how to walk in faithfulness.

Teaching Point

The law was never meant to replace promise.

It was meant to serve the larger story of promise.

Discussion

Ask:

- What is the difference between obeying God out of trust and obeying God to prove yourself?
- Why do people confuse those two things?

Section 7: Promise Comes Before Law (Galatians 3:15–18)

Paul then uses an everyday example.

If a covenant has already been established, you do not cancel it by adding another one later.

His point is this:

God's promise to Abraham came first.
The law came 430 years later.

So the law cannot undo the promise.

That means the deeper story of God has always been about promise, not about law.

The law matters, but it does not replace the original storyline.

God's people were always meant to be a people who trust His promises.

Teaching Point

The law is real and good, but it is not the foundation of the story.

The promise is.

Discussion

Ask:

- Why does Paul spend so much time showing that promise comes before law?
- What happens when people reverse that order?

Section 8: Why Then Was the Law Given? (Galatians 3:19–22)

This is the question Paul knows everyone is asking:

If the promise is the main thing, why did God give the law at all?

Paul says the law was added because of transgressions, and it was given through a mediator.

I see that mediator as Moses.

Here is the picture:

God made a promise.

That promise would eventually be fulfilled through the Seed.

But until the fullness of that promise arrived, God gave His people the law as something that would guide and carry them forward.

So the law is not against the promises of God.

Paul says that directly.

The law and the promise are not enemies.

They are doing different things in the story.

Teaching Point

The law has a purpose, but it is not the same purpose as the promise.

If the law could accomplish what the promise was meant to do, God would have started there.

Discussion

Ask:

- Why is it important that Paul says the law is not opposed to the promise?
- Why do people often assume grace and law must be enemies?

Section 9: The Pedagogue, the Guardian (Galatians 3:23–25)

This is one of the most important images in the chapter.

Paul says the law was our guardian until Christ came.

The Greek word is *paidagōgos*, often translated guardian or pedagogue.

This is not really a schoolteacher in the modern sense.

In the first-century world, a pedagogue was a protector. If a child came into an inheritance before they were old enough to receive it, a guardian would care for them until the appointed time.

That is Paul's image.

The law guarded God's people.

The law protected them.

The law carried them until the inheritance could be fully realized.

Now that the promise has come to fulfillment in Christ, the guardian's task is complete.

Teaching Point

The law was never the inheritance.

It was the guardian that carried God's people toward the inheritance.

Discussion

Ask:

- How does this image change the way you think about the law?
- Why is "guardian" a better picture here than "prison guard" or "enemy"?

Section 10: One in Christ (Galatians 3:26–29)

Then Paul lands the plane with one of the boldest statements in the New Testament:

“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

That does not mean those identities stop existing.

It means none of those identities are the basis of belonging anymore.

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.

That would have sounded explosive to this audience.

Paul is saying:

If you trust the story of God in Jesus, you belong to the family.

Teaching Point

Jesus does not erase people’s story, background, or identity.

But He does remove those things as barriers to belonging.

Discussion

Ask:

- Why would this statement have sounded so radical in Paul’s day?
- What kinds of labels still divide people today?

Section 11: From Slave to Heir (Galatians 4:1–7)

Paul says the heir, while underage, is like a slave, even though the inheritance is already his. He is under guardians until the time set by the father.

Then comes the good news:

When the set time had fully come, God sent His Son.

Why?

To redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

And now the Spirit cries out in us, “Abba, Father.”

That means the story has reached its moment of inheritance.

God’s people are no longer standing outside waiting.

The promise has come to fulfillment.

The nations are being invited in.

We are not merely tolerated.

We are adopted.

We are heirs.

Teaching Point

The end of the story is not outsiders hovering near the family.

It is adopted children crying out, “Abba, Father.”

Discussion

Ask:

- What is the difference between being tolerated and being adopted?
- Why is adoption such a powerful image for what God has done?

Big Takeaway

Galatians 3 is Paul saying:

This story has always been about promise.
It has always been about trust.
It has always been leading somewhere.

And in Jesus, that promise has opened the door for the nations.

So if you belong to Christ, you do not stand on the outside trying to earn your way in.

You are already an heir.

Application

Ask:

- Where are you tempted to base your relationship with God on performance instead of promise?
- What identity marker do people tend to trust instead of Jesus?
- Do you live more like a fearful outsider or like a welcomed heir?

Weekly Challenge

Challenge students to do one of these this week:

- Write down one lie they believe about needing to earn God's love, then replace it with a truth from Galatians 3
- Include someone who seems like an outsider
- Pray each day, "Father, teach me to live like an heir, not a slave"
- Read Galatians 3 again and circle every reference to faith, promise, Spirit, or inheritance

Closing

The gospel did not begin with your effort.

It began with God's promise.

And if God's promise has been fulfilled in Jesus, then you do not have to prove your way into the family.

You belong by faith.

You are Abraham's seed in Christ.

You are an heir.

So stop living like the door is still closed.

In Jesus, the inheritance has been opened.