

Review Questions (Lesson #9)

Answer T for true, F for false

1. Gentile converts did not have to observe the Law of Moses to be sons of God.
 2. Galatians 3:28 teaches that God permits female Christians to be preachers and elders.
 3. A person becomes a son of God at the point of baptism.
 4. If you faithfully observe the Law of Moses, you are Abraham's seed.
 5. God required Jewish converts to Christ to continue observing the Mosaic Law.
- Give short answers:**
1. As Paul uses the terms in 3:26 through 4:7, what is the difference between a child and a son?

2. "The faith," as used by Paul in this lesson, stands in direct contrast to what?
3. Upon being baptized, were converts to Christ spiritually mature immediately? Explain:
4. What, if anything, is the difference between being obedient to the faith and obeying the gospel?
5. To which one of the promises made to Abraham are we the heirs?

Fill in the blanks:

1. At baptism we become _____ with Christ (put Him on like a _____).
2. Since we are _____'s, it follows that we are _____'s seed because _____ himself is Abraham's _____.
3. Not observance of the _____ of _____, but obedience to "_____ is the way to become a _____ of _____.
4. All who have _____ the gospel are one in _____, regardless of the _____ distinctions used by sinful people to _____ us.
5. Regardless of _____, social _____, or _____, every-one comes to _____ in the same way – through "_____ " (i.e. by _____ to the _____).

Galatians: Guarding the Gospel of Grace

Lesson #9 Sons of God (Galatians 3:26-29)

Virtually every culture recognizes some point at which a minor child becomes an adult with additional privileges and responsibilities. In the USA that is generally age 18, when one can vote, join the military, and get married without parental permission. Paul the apostle used the change from minor to adult to illustrate the transition from the Law of Moses to the Gospel of Christ. He referred to the Law as the guardian ("pedagogue"), a trusted slave assigned to supervise a boy until he reached manhood (Galatians 3:24, 25; see lesson #8). Now Paul expands that illustration, showing that in Christ, we are full-fledged sons with all the rights and privileges of sonship. We will approach Paul's explanation like a newspaper reporter, asking such questions as: Who? What? How? Where? and When?

Who? "For you are all sons of God . . ." (3:26). The Judaizers would have restricted any favorable relationship with God to Jews and proselytes (Gentiles who had converted to Judaism). They taught that salvation depended on submitting to circumcision and Law-keeping (Acts 15:1). Paul, however, affirms that all of the Galatian Christians (and, by extension, all Christians everywhere) are sons of God, regardless of their pre-Christian background. Some of the Galatians had converted from Judaism to Christ. Most, however, had come out of Paganism (idol-worship). For those of Jewish extraction, their obligation to observe circumcision, the Sabbath, dietary laws, etc., ended at the cross. They could continue these practices voluntarily if they chose (see Romans 14), but they could not bind them on others. Gentiles were never under the Law of Moses, nor did God require them to keep it when they obeyed the gospel.

What? "For you are all sons of God . . ." (3:26). From this verse until 4:7, Paul draws a sharp contrast between "children" (as in 4:3) and "sons." Unfortunately the KJV failed to make that distinction in 3:26, using "children" rather than "sons." Virtually all other translations correctly render it as "sons." One might ask, "aren't sons children?" Yes, in the sense of "offspring," but that is not Paul's concern here. The way he uses the terms, "children" are minors in need of supervision as discussed in the earlier portion of this chapter (see also the first seven verses of chapter four, which will be covered in lesson #10). But "sons" are full-grown male offspring with all the privileges and advantages of adulthood.

As seen in lesson #8, the Judaizers were regressing from adulthood back to being toddlers and adolescents! In particular, they were attempting to force the Gentile converts to accept the status of minor children when, in fact, they were already "sons" (adults). This is not to say that the Gentiles, or any other converts to Christ, were instantly mature spiritually when they obeyed the gospel. All Christians begin as "babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1) and gradually grow to spiritual maturity. But Paul is not dealing with the Galatians' level of spiritual maturity, but with their *status* as sons, which was theirs from the point of conversion.

Though "sons" is a male term, Paul's concern is not gender, but status (minor as opposed to adult). That he has female Christians in mind as well as males is clear from 3:28.

How? "Through (by means of) the faith" (3:26). Here, Paul states how the Galatians became sons of God. It wasn't through the Law of Moses, as the false teachers were claiming. Rather, it was through the faith. As shown in previous lessons, "the faith" (of Christ) stands in direct contrast to "the Law" (of Moses). How unfortunate that all of our English versions fail to make this distinction here! They ignore the definite article ("the), though it is present in virtually all of the Greek manuscripts; thus they say "through faith" rather than "through the faith." Our personal (subjective) faith in Jesus is essential, to be sure. But Paul's concern here is not one's personal (subjective) faith, but "the faith" (objective), that is to say, the Gospel.

Acts 6:7 speaks of people converting to Christ as being "obedient to the faith." And Paul warned of the terrible eternal fate of those who "do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). To obey "the faith" is to obey "the gospel." Not observance of the Law of Moses, but obedience to "the faith" (Gospel), is the way to become a son of God.

Where? "In Christ Jesus" (3:26). Since the Galatians had obeyed the gospel, thus becoming sons of God, they were "in Christ Jesus." It is critical to understand that the prepositional phrase "in Christ Jesus" modifies "sons." It tells "where" the sons are. It does *not* modify "faith." At the risk of sounding hyper-critical, most of our English versions are weak and confusing here. They commonly read, "through faith in Christ Jesus," as though Paul is identifying Jesus as the object of our personal faith. Many other passages show that Jesus is, indeed the one in whom we place our trust (faith). But Paul's point in this verse is that sons of God are "in Christ Jesus." The English standard version comes closer to accuracy than most

others: "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith."

When? "baptized into Christ" (3:27). "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Since we are sons of God "in Christ Jesus" (v. 26), Paul now reminds us of when we came to be in Christ – at the moment of our baptism. Further, he states that at baptism we became clothed with Christ (put Him on like a garment). When one puts on a garment, we say he is "in" the garment. ("How will I recognize Jack?" – He's the one in the green shirt.) In like manner, when one puts on Christ at baptism, he is then "in Christ" and is a son of God.

In Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (v. 28). Regardless of ethnicity, social status, or gender, everyone comes to Christ the same way – through "the faith" (i.e. by obedience to the gospel). The Judaizers were wrong in withholding Christian fellowship from Gentile converts unless they became circumcised and observed the Law of Moses. The Jews and Gentiles came to Christ the same way – they were one in Christ. The same is true today regarding various racial and ethnic groups. All who have obeyed the gospel are one in Christ, regardless of fleshly distinctions used by sinful people to divide us.

Verse 28 is frequently abused by those who want women to serve in roles the New Testament reserves for men (preachers, elders, etc.). Note that Paul is not dealing with gender roles in this text as he does in 1 Timothy 2:8-15 and 1 Corinthians 14:35. Rather, his concern is the unity of those who are "in Christ." Respect for the roles the New Testament assigns to men and women within the church has no negative impact on unity. In fact, it enhances unity as various members of the body fulfill their God-given functions (see Romans 12:1-8).

"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). This is a "first class conditional sentence" where the condition is viewed as fulfilled. So "if" does not express doubt; since we are Christ's, it follows that we are Abraham's seed because Christ Himself is Abraham's seed (v. 16). Thus we are heirs of the promise God made to Abraham to bless the world through his seed. Under the Law of Moses, Gentiles, women, and slaves did not have the same inheritance rights as free Israelite men. In Christ, however, none of these worldly distinctions prevent one from being an heir of the spiritual promise God made to Abraham. The next lesson will continue Paul's teaching regarding our status as heirs.