



THE LOOKOUT

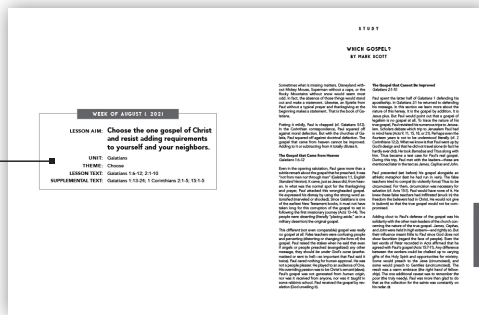
AUGUST 2021

Unit: GALATIANS Theme: CHOOSE

Overview: Galatians has been called the Magna Carta of Christian freedom. In it, Paul defines the gospel in terms of liberation. If it feels like a straitjacket, it probably is not the gospel. One man said, “Since I became a Christian, I do anything I want to—the only difference is that Jesus changed all my want-tos.” This liberating gospel contains the righteousness found only in Christ, which is sufficient for living by the Spirit.

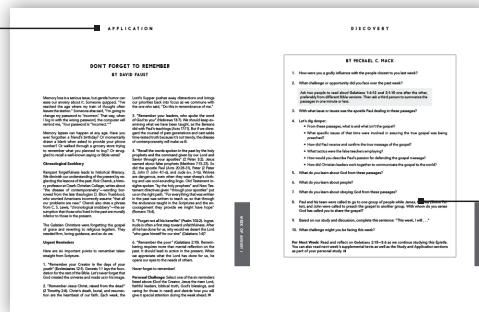
HOW TO USE

Each week has a **lesson aim**, **lesson text**, and **supplemental text**.



Tabs indicate the week of each lesson.

Each week features three sections: **Study**, **Application**, and **Discovery**.



Use the **Discovery** questions to study, discuss, and apply the Scripture passages in a group or class.

WEEK OF AUGUST 15, 2021

LESSON AIM: **Choose the identity of a son and heir of God instead of a slave.**

UNIT: Galatians

THEME: Choose

LESSON TEXT: Galatians 3:23—4:10

SUPPLEMENTAL TEXT: 1 John 3:1-3; Romans 8:14-17; Titus 3:3-8

WHICH INHERITANCE?

BY MARK SCOTT

The rich young ruler and the lawyer framed up their questions about eternal life to Jesus in telling ways (Mark 10:17; Luke 10:25). They both wanted to know what to do to “inherit” eternal life. One does not normally do anything to inherit something. That is based on what someone else does. Do their questions betray a works righteousness system?

Paul continued his arguments about being made right with God by faith in Christ as opposed to works of the law. He argued his point by speaking of the timing of the coming of the Holy Spirit, the place of Abraham, the purpose of the law, and when the promise of God to save the world through Jesus entered the progressive revelation (i.e., the unfolding of the biblical story).

In this section, Paul used several metaphors to drive home his point about being saved by faith in Christ as opposed to works of the law; the primary metaphor Paul used was *inheritance*.

Prison (*Galatians 3:23*)

We were *held in custody* until God turned a new page in history (think about the old and new covenants and the Epistle to the Hebrews). *Custody* is a military word implying being in prison. We were *locked up* (shut up or enclosed) until the time of Christ. Prison cannot “fix” the prisoner any more than a flashlight can “fix” a broken car. Prison and the flashlight can only reveal the problem.

Guardian and Trustee (*Galatians 3:24-25; 4:2*)

The word *guardian* translates two different Greek words in our text. In Galatians 3:24, the word means schoolmaster or governess (maybe even bus driver). It is the person who escorts the kids to the main teacher (i.e., Christ). Paul said the law was to function in that role until Christ came.

In 4:2 (after an unfortunate chapter division) *guardians* means the people entrusted to act in another’s name. The word alongside of this (*trustees*) means the ones who manage the house. A person could be the legal heir of a vast fortune, but until that person “comes of age,” others must take care of the inheritance. Example: Josiah became king of Judah at age 8 (2 Kings 22:1), but he obviously did not immediately begin running the country.

Heirs (*Galatians 3:26-29*)

Heirs is the metaphor that is closest to our key word of *inheritance*. Of course, *heir* refers to the one who is set to inherit something. When heirs “come of age” they can possess the full rights of the inheritance. We see this in these verses. Faith in Christ brings us into God’s family, and we get the privilege of being called God’s children (v. 26; cf. 1 John 3:1; Romans 8:15-17). The evidence of that faith is expressed in immersion (v. 27). Paul described it in terms of being clothed. In Roman society when a child came of age, they gave that child a special toga to indicate maturity (John Valvoord, *Biblical Knowledge Commentary*). Baptism is that garment. God is very inclusive in terms of who can be an heir (v. 28). Ethnicity, social status, and gender do not matter. All heirs can share in being part of *Abraham’s seed*—another metaphor and the word from which we get the English word *sperm* (Genesis 17:7).

Slaves and Adoption (*Galatians 4:1-10*)

Paul extended this teaching on heirs in chapter 4. He repeated some of the ideas already established. While under the law, it was as if we were still “infants” (*underage*). But God knew when we would come of age. Everything changed when, at just the right *time*, God sent Jesus. The incarnation (Paul’s hint at the virgin birth?) signaled the ending of slavery and the beginning of sonship or adoption. Jesus was born of Mary while the law (the old way of being right with God) was still in force. But the goal was to *redeem* (to purchase, like buying something from the market) *those under the law*.

This redemption would open our liberating identity, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, give us full access to the *Father* (allowing for an intimate relationship), and full rights as heirs. To go back to being a slave when God has made us sons would be ridiculous. But some in the churches of Galatia seemed bent on such.

Forces (*Galatians 4:3, 9*)

Forces may not qualify as a metaphor, but Paul referred to worldly forces (*elemental spiritual forces*) and spiritual forces (*weak and miserable forces*). The world can enslave us with its own ungodly principalities and powers, but religion can also enslave us with its rituals and requirements (*days and months and seasons and years*). We should choose an eternal and liberating inheritance in Christ as opposed to an earthly and legalistic inheritance. ■

APPLICATION

CHOOSING YOUR ANCESTORS

BY DAVID FAUST

Are there any bad apples on your family tree? If you are curious about your ancestry, you can take a DNA test. Comedian Jim Gaffigan jokes, “You do learn things from those genetic tests. I discovered I wasted a hundred bucks.”

My dad claimed that our family is distantly related to William Penn and John Chapman (better known as Johnny Appleseed). I can’t prove I’m related to these famous Americans, but I ponder the possibility while I stir applesauce into my oatmeal.

Even if we can identify our ancestors, we don’t get to choose them. I would have been a better basketball player if I were 6 foot 4 inches tall, but my DNA made me stop growing at 5 foot 11. Ancestors I never knew determined the color of my eyes and the shape of my face.

Prior generations have a spiritual impact, too. From Adam and Eve till today, sin has tainted humanity and tilted us toward disaster. Theologians argue about the nature and extent of the damage, but there’s no denying that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Thankfully, though, we can choose the spiritual family we call our own. When we receive the Lord Jesus, God gives us “the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God” (John 1:12-13).

Here is a remarkable promise: “So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27). We get to choose our spiritual ancestors! By God’s grace we “are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (v. 29).

The Difference It Makes

Why does it matter if we are “Abraham’s seed”? Here are four ways our spiritual heritage makes a difference.

It affects how we think of God. He is not only our Creator and Judge; he is the Father who adopted us, the Redeemer who saved us, the Teacher who instructs us.

It affects how we view others. The gospel transcends social barriers that devalue, distract, and divide. “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

It affects how we see ourselves. We are members of God’s intergenerational family. Our worth isn’t determined by the titles we wear, the income we earn, the esteem others offer us, or where our name appears on an organizational chart. “You are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir” (Galatians 4:7).

It affects how we think about eternity. By faith, Abraham followed the Lord to a place he had never seen. By faith, Moses led the Israelites through the desert to the Promised Land. The Lord has in store for us “an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade . . . kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4). By faith, we align with God’s covenant people throughout history who have looked forward to that eternal inheritance. We join a family of believers that includes Abraham, Moses, Ruth, David, Esther, Mary, Peter, John, and Paul. When we all get to Heaven, what a family reunion that will be!

Personal Challenge: On a piece of paper or in your journal, write “Because I belong to Jesus Christ, I am . . .” and then write what comes to mind about your identity in Christ. (For example: “I am . . . forgiven . . . adopted . . . part of God’s family . . . not alone . . .”) **L**

DISCOVERY

BY MICHAEL C. MACK

1. With whom did you share the gospel using the plan you developed from our study last week?
2. What new opportunity or challenge came your way over the past week?

Ask two people to read aloud **Galatians 3:23—4:10** one after the other, preferably from different Bible versions. Then ask a third person to briefly summarize the passage.

3. What main point or points is Paul making in this passage?
4. Let's dig deeper:
 - What metaphors did Paul use to explain law (the old covenant) and grace (the new covenant)?
 - What contrasts did Paul make in the passage?
 - What do those contrasts demonstrate to you?
 - Look for any conditional statements (if-then statements, although those exact words may not be used) in this passage. What do they teach you about following Christ?
 - What does this passage teach you about unity (oneness) in Christ?
 - What kinds of things tend to spiritually enslave people?
 - Why would a full heir (adult child) of God, with all the freedom that brings, want to go back to living as if they were not an heir?
5. What do you learn about God (and how you view him) from this passage?
6. What do you learn about other people (and how you view them)?
7. How is obedience as a child different from obedience as a slave?
8. The gospel message is weaved into this passage (see especially verses such as 3:26-27 and 4:4-7). Consider a person you know out of the following groups: an unsaved person, a backslidden person, a legalistic church attendee, a prejudiced church attendee. What verses from this passage would you share with that person, and how would you initiate the conversation?
9. Based on our study and discussion, complete this sentence: "This week, I will . . ."
10. What dilemma or struggle do you anticipate this week?

For Next Week: Read and reflect on **Galatians 4:21—5:15**. You can also read next week's supplemental texts as well as the Study and Application sections as part of your personal study. ■