

The Book of Galatians, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 7: Sons of God Through Faith, Baptized into Christ

Galatians 3:26–4:7

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

This passage is the tender summit of the letter and one of its most doctrinally important sections. Paul declares that believers are sons of God through faith, and he ties that sonship directly to baptism into Christ, in which we put on Christ himself. He then unfolds the riches of our status: union with Christ, unity across every human division, membership in Abraham's family, adoption by the Father, the gift of the Spirit, and the inheritance of heirs. For our heritage this is a key bridge text, because it presents faith and baptism together as the way we come to be clothed with Christ, against the error of faith only.

The teacher should handle two matters with particular care. First, the relationship of faith and baptism. Paul does not pit them against each other or treat baptism as an optional extra added after salvation. He says we are sons through faith, and in the same breath grounds that sonship in baptism into Christ. Baptism is the appointed moment when faith lays hold of Christ and is clothed with him, not a meritorious work by which we earn what grace gives. Present them as a single, unified response of faith. Second, the unity of 3:28. It proclaims equal standing, worth, and access to salvation for all in Christ, and it abolishes every basis for prejudice, but it does not erase the distinct roles God gives men and women in the church and the home, which other passages address. Teach the glorious oneness without overturning what Scripture says elsewhere.

Pastorally, this lesson is about identity and intimacy. Many believers know they are forgiven but have never truly felt themselves to be beloved children who may call God Abba. Aim to move students from the distance of the slave to the nearness of the son, so that the doctrine of adoption becomes the warm ground of their daily life with God. Let them leave marveling that the Father sent his Son to make them sons, and his Spirit to make them sure of it.

Question 1

Student Question:

Paul declares, "in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" (3:26). What does it mean to be a son or child of God, and what does this verse teach about how that relationship is received?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul makes a sweeping declaration: "in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith." The term sons, which includes daughters, was a word of full standing in that culture, carrying the

rights of family membership and inheritance. Paul is telling the Galatians that they are not servants or outsiders but full members of God's own family.

Note how the relationship is received: through faith, and in Christ. We do not become children of God by natural birth, by good behavior, or by keeping the law. We become his children by faith that unites us to Christ, the unique Son, so that in him we share the family relationship. Our sonship is derived from his.

Help students feel the magnitude of this. To be a child of God is to be loved with the love the Father has for his own, to have access to him, to be secure in his household, and to stand to inherit all he has promised. This is not a distant legal arrangement but a real and intimate relationship.

Set the trajectory for the lesson. Paul will go on to ground this sonship in baptism, to celebrate the unity it creates, and to deepen it with the language of adoption and the Spirit. But it begins here, with the staggering announcement that ordinary people who trust Christ are children of the living God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Believers as full sons and daughters of God, with the standing of family members
- Sonship received through faith that unites us to Christ, not by birth or merit
- Our sonship derived from Christ, the unique Son
- The intimacy, security, and inheritance that belong to God's children

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to be a full son or daughter of God?
- How is this status received, according to the verse?
- How does deriving our sonship from Christ change how we view it?

Question 2

Student Question:

Paul wants believers to know they are children of God, not servants kept at a distance. Does your daily experience of God match your true status as his beloved child, and where does it fall short of the security and joy that status should bring?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question asks whether our felt experience has caught up with our true status. Paul says we are children of God, yet many believers go through their days feeling more like anxious servants or distant employees, unsure of God's welcome. There is often a gap between what is true of us in Christ and what we actually feel.

Help students locate where the gap shows up. It may appear as a nagging sense that God is disappointed in them, a reluctance to approach him after failure, a joyless duty in their religion, or a fear that his love must be re-earned. These are the marks of someone living below their status, like an heir who still thinks and acts like an orphan.

Point to the remedy, which is not trying harder to feel loved but believing more deeply what is true. Feelings follow conviction over time. As we meditate on the gospel, return to our baptism into Christ, and listen to the Spirit who says Abba, the experience gradually rises to match the reality.

Encourage patience and honesty. The Christian life involves growing into our identity, learning by long practice to live as the beloved children we already are. Invite students to name the specific place where their experience falls short and to bring it honestly to the Father.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The gap between our true status in Christ and our felt experience
- Marks of living below our status: fear, joylessness, and earning
- Feelings following from believing the gospel, not the reverse
- Growing into our identity as a normal part of the Christian life

Discussion Prompts

- Where does your experience of God fall short of your status as his child?
- What feelings reveal that you are living below your identity?
- How can you grow into the security and joy of being God's child?

Question 3

Student Question:

Paul says, "as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (3:27). What does it mean to be clothed with Christ, to put him on, and how does that change the way God sees us and the way we are to see ourselves?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul explains how we come to be in Christ: "as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The image is of clothing. In baptism the believer is clothed with Christ, wrapped in him, so that Christ himself becomes our covering before God. We come to the Father not in the rags of our own record but in the spotless garment of his Son.

Unfold what being clothed with Christ means for how God sees us. When the Father looks at a believer united to Christ, he sees his Son's righteousness covering us. Our acceptance does not rest on our own performance but on the One we have put on. This is the heart of our security: we wear Christ.

Then unfold what it means for how we see ourselves. To have put on Christ is to have taken on a new identity, a new family resemblance. We are now people who belong to him and bear his name, and that identity is meant to shape everything, the way a uniform shapes how a soldier carries himself.

Hold together the once and the ongoing. We put on Christ decisively in coming to him, and yet Paul elsewhere urges us to keep putting on Christ daily, living out in practice what is true in principle (Romans 13:14; Colossians 3:12–14). The garment we received is one we are called to wear well.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Baptism into Christ as being clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27)
- Christ's righteousness as the believer's covering before God
- A new identity and family resemblance in Christ
- Putting on Christ as both a decisive reality and a daily calling (Romans 13:14)

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean that God sees us clothed in Christ?
- How should wearing Christ shape your sense of identity?
- What is the difference between having put on Christ and daily putting him on?

Question 4

Student Question:

Paul's image of putting on Christ implies that there are old garments to take off. What old clothing, old habits, attitudes, or identities, is Jesus calling you to take off so that you can visibly wear him instead?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

If we have put on Christ, then there are old garments to take off. This self-examining question presses the practical side of our new identity. Paul elsewhere speaks of putting off the old self with its practices and putting on the new (Colossians 3:9–10). The new wardrobe of Christ leaves no room for the filthy clothes of the old life.

Help students name the specific garments. Old habits of speech, attitudes of bitterness or pride, identities built on success or appearance or grievance, patterns of sin worn so long they feel like part of us, all of these are old clothing that does not match the Christ we now wear. Naming them is the first step to taking them off.

Make clear that this is daily and deliberate. We do not drift out of old patterns; we take them off intentionally, the way we choose what to wear each morning. The Spirit empowers the change, but we must cooperate, refusing the old garment and reaching for the new.

Encourage one concrete removal. Ask each student to identify a single old garment Jesus is calling them to take off this week, and to picture, concretely, what wearing Christ instead would look like in that exact area of life.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Putting off the old self as the counterpart of putting on Christ (Colossians 3:9–10)
- Old habits, attitudes, and identities as garments to be removed
- Daily, deliberate cooperation with the Spirit in change
- Practical transformation flowing from a new identity

Discussion Prompts

- What old garment is Jesus calling you to take off?
- Why does taking off the old require deliberate intention?
- What would wearing Christ instead look like in that area?

Question 5

Student Question:

Paul says that in Christ “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (3:28). What unity does this great verse describe, and what does it not mean, since Scripture elsewhere still gives men and women distinct roles in the church and the home?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul proclaims one of the most beautiful truths in all of Scripture: in Christ “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” The deepest divisions of the ancient world, race, class, and gender, do not determine who belongs to God or how fully they belong. All who are in Christ stand on equal ground before him.

Spell out what this unity means. Every believer, regardless of ethnicity, social rank, or sex, is equally a child of God, equally clothed with Christ, equally an heir of the promise, equally loved and welcomed. There are no second-class citizens in the family of God, no inner ring of the truly accepted. This abolishes every basis for pride, partiality, or contempt among God’s people.

Now clarify what the verse does not mean, carefully and without defensiveness. Paul is speaking of equal standing in salvation and equal access to God, not erasing every God-given distinction. Scripture, including Paul’s own letters, still assigns men and women complementary and distinct roles in the church and the home, so that, for example, the work of elders and of teaching in the assembled church is given to men (1 Timothy 2:11–12; 1 Corinthians 11:3). Galatians 3:28

establishes equal worth and equal salvation; it does not overturn these role distinctions. The two truths are not in conflict: equal in standing, distinct in role.

Bring it home to the church's life. The oneness Paul describes should be visible in how we treat one another, refusing favoritism toward the wealthy, welcoming people of every background, and honoring every member as a full child of God. A congregation that lives this way puts the gospel on display.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Equal standing, worth, and access to salvation for all in Christ (Galatians 3:28)
- The abolition of every basis for prejudice, partiality, and contempt
- Equal salvation distinguished from God-given role distinctions for men and women (1 Timothy 2:11–12; 1 Corinthians 11:3)
- Visible unity across race, class, and status as a display of the gospel

Discussion Prompts

- What does our oneness in Christ mean for how we treat one another?
- How do we affirm equal worth while honoring distinct roles God assigns?
- Where does favoritism still creep into the life of the church?

Question 6

Student Question:

Paul tears down the walls of prejudice and partiality among God's people. Where do you notice partiality, prejudice, or a sense of superiority in your own heart, and how does your oneness in Christ confront it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns the unity of the gospel into a searchlight on our own hearts. It is easy to celebrate oneness in Christ in the abstract and still harbor partiality in private. Paul's vision exposes the prejudice, snobbery, and quiet sense of superiority that can live in any of us.

Help students examine the subtle forms partiality takes. We may gravitate toward people like us and overlook those who are different. We may judge by appearance, accent, income, or background. We may feel, without ever saying it, that certain people are less than us. The gospel calls all of this into question.

Apply the truth of oneness directly. If the person we are tempted to look down on is, in Christ, our equal, our fellow heir, clothed in the same Christ we wear, then contempt becomes impossible to justify. We cannot despise someone the Father has adopted as his own child.

Move toward repentance and action. Invite students to name, at least before God, a specific prejudice or partiality they need to surrender, and to consider a concrete step toward the very people they have been tempted to exclude or look down on.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The sin of partiality and prejudice among God's people (James 2:1–9)
- Oneness in Christ as the ground for repenting of contempt
- Equal dignity of every believer as a fellow heir clothed in Christ
- Repentance expressed in concrete welcome and honor

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you notice partiality or superiority in your own heart?
- How does oneness in Christ confront that attitude directly?
- What concrete step could move you toward someone you have excluded?

Question 7

Student Question:

Paul says, “God sent forth his Son ... to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (4:4–5). What does the truth of adoption add to our understanding of salvation, beyond forgiveness, and what does it tell us about the heart of God toward us?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul reaches the climax of his argument with the language of adoption: “God sent forth his Son ... so that we might receive adoption as sons.” Adoption goes beyond forgiveness. A judge can forgive a criminal and send him on his way; only a father takes that person home and makes him a son. God does not merely acquit us; he adopts us into his family.

Unfold what adoption reveals about salvation. Forgiveness deals with our guilt; adoption gives us a place. Justification declares us righteous; adoption makes us children. The gospel is not only a courtroom acquittal but a homecoming. God wanted not just cleared defendants but beloved sons and daughters around his table.

Notice the cost and the timing. Paul says that in the fullness of time God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem us. Our adoption was secured by the incarnation and the cross. The Father gave his own Son so that he could gain many sons. This is the lengths to which his love would go.

Let this reveal the heart of God toward us. Adoption is the act of a Father who wanted us, who planned for us, who paid dearly for us. Many people carry an image of God as reluctant or distant. The doctrine of adoption shatters that image. He is a Father who set his heart on bringing us home.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Adoption as the gift of a place in the family, beyond forgiveness
- Justification declaring us righteous, adoption making us children
- Redemption secured by the incarnation and cross in the fullness of time (Galatians 4:4–5)
- The heart of God as a Father who set his love on bringing us home

Discussion Prompts

- How does adoption go beyond forgiveness?
- What does the cost of our adoption reveal about God's love?
- How does this truth challenge a picture of God as distant or reluctant?

Question 8

Student Question:

Paul says the Spirit prompts us to cry "Abba! Father!" (4:6), the cry of intimate trust. What keeps you from relating to God with that kind of closeness, and what would change if you truly believed he welcomes you as a beloved child?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Paul shows that adoption comes with a gift that makes it real to us: "God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" Abba is the warm, intimate word a child uses for a beloved father. The Spirit himself moves the believer to approach God not with cringing fear but with the confidence of a cherished child.

Help students consider what keeps them from this intimacy. For some it is a harsh image of God inherited from a difficult earthly father. For others it is unconfessed sin, or the lingering sense that God merely tolerates them. For many it is simply never having been told that such closeness is theirs. The Spirit invites them past all of it.

Distinguish reverent intimacy from casualness. To call God Abba is not to treat him lightly; he remains the holy, almighty God. But holiness and intimacy are not at odds in the gospel. We come to a Father who is both infinitely great and tenderly near, and we may climb into his lap, so to speak, without ever forgetting who he is.

Invite a change in how students pray. Encourage them to come to God this week consciously as beloved children, beginning their prayers with the confidence that he welcomes them. The doctrine of adoption is meant to be felt at the level of daily conversation with the Father.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Spirit of adoption moving us to cry Abba, Father (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15)
- Intimacy with God as the birthright of his children

- Reverent closeness that holds holiness and intimacy together
- Hindrances to intimacy: harsh images of God, sin, and ignorance of our status

Discussion Prompts

- What keeps you from relating to God with the closeness of a child?
- How do holiness and intimacy belong together in the gospel?
- How might your prayers change if you truly came as a beloved child?

Question 9

Student Question:

Paul says we are “sons of God, through faith,” and immediately adds, “for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (3:26–27). How do faith and baptism belong together in coming to Christ, so that we understand baptism as the God-appointed moment when faith is clothed with Christ rather than as a human work that earns salvation, and so that we reject the error of a faith only that leaves baptism aside?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question carries the heaviest doctrinal weight of the lesson, and it must be taught with both clarity and warmth. Paul says, “you are all sons of God, through faith,” and then, without pausing, gives the ground of it: “for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” Faith and baptism are not two competing answers to how we are saved; they are one seamless response. The faith that makes us sons is the faith that takes hold of Christ in baptism.

Address directly the error of faith only. Some teach that a person is saved by faith alone at the moment of belief, and that baptism is only an outward sign added later. Paul’s own words resist this. He does not say we are sons through faith and, by the way, were also baptized. He says we are sons through faith because we were baptized into Christ and so clothed with him. The putting on of Christ that makes us God’s children is located in baptism. To set baptism aside is to set aside the very moment Paul ties to our sonship.

Now guard the opposite error so that no one hears baptism as a meritorious work. Baptism does not earn salvation, and it is not a human achievement we present to God. It is the appointed place where faith reaches out empty-handed to receive Christ, where we are united with him in his death and raised to new life (Romans 6:3–4). The whole act is the work of God’s grace received by faith; the believer is passive in the water, buried and raised by another. As Peter says, baptism saves not by the removing of dirt from the body but as the appeal of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Christ (1 Peter 3:21). It is faith’s response, not faith’s reward.

Lay out the unified pattern the New Testament presents, so students can hold it together. A person hears the gospel, believes in Jesus as Lord and Christ, repents of sin, confesses him, and

is baptized into him for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Spirit (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9–10; Galatians 3:26–27). These are not a ladder of works we climb to earn God’s favor; they are the single, living response of a heart laying hold of grace. Faith is the hand, and baptism is that hand taking hold of Christ. To pit them against each other is to misread Paul.

End in the wonder of it. The teacher should help students see that this is not cold doctrine but glorious news. In the waters of baptism, faith was clothed with Christ, and an orphan became a son. We do not look back on our baptism as a work we performed, but as the moment grace wrapped us in Jesus. Let students rejoice that the God who appointed faith also appointed the place where faith would receive his Son.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith and baptism as one unified response, not competing answers (Galatians 3:26–27)
- Baptism into Christ as the appointed moment of putting on Christ and becoming sons
- Against faith only that sets baptism aside as a mere later sign
- Baptism not a meritorious work but faith receiving grace, the believer buried and raised by God (Romans 6:3–4; 1 Peter 3:21)
- The New Testament pattern: hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9–10)
- Faith as the hand and baptism as that hand laying hold of Christ

Discussion Prompts

- How do Paul’s words tie our sonship to baptism into Christ?
- How would you answer someone who says baptism is only an outward sign added later?
- How do we affirm the necessity of baptism without making it a work that earns salvation?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back across the whole passage. Paul says you are “no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God” (4:7). Name one specific way Jesus is calling you, this week, to stop living like a slave and start living as the free and beloved heir you have become.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone draws the whole passage to its triumphant conclusion: “so you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.” Paul wants the change in status to produce a change in living. The believer is meant to stop thinking and acting like a slave and begin living as the free, beloved heir they have become.

Help students see the difference between slave-living and son-living. A slave works from fear, earns his keep, and never feels secure; a son lives from love, rests in his place, and trusts his

father. Many believers are sons by status but slaves in their experience, still striving to earn what they already possess and bracing for a rejection that will never come.

Press for one concrete change. Ask each student to name a single way they tend to live like a slave, perhaps in anxious performance, in fear of God's rejection, in joyless duty, and to identify what living as a free heir would look like instead in that exact area this week.

Close in worship and assurance. The Father sent his Son to redeem us and his Spirit to assure us, and he has made us heirs of everything he has promised. Send students home no longer as orphans or slaves, but as sons and daughters who can lift their eyes and say, with confidence and joy, Abba, Father.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The believer's status changed from slave to son and heir (Galatians 4:7)
- Son-living from love and security versus slave-living from fear and earning
- The call to bring our experience into line with our status
- Assurance grounded in the Father's sending of the Son and the Spirit

Discussion Prompts

- Where do you still tend to live like a slave rather than a son?
- What would living as a free, beloved heir look like in that area?
- How do the gift of the Son and the Spirit assure you of your place?