

LAW, LIBERTY, AND LIFE IN JESUS - Knowing How it all Works

Part thirteen - Teaching #2155

Sunday, January 16th, 2022 - 10 a.m.

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CHRIST'S HOUSEHOLD - WHERE GUESTS BECOME FAMILY

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:26-29 - "...for through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus. [27] For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ. [28] There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise."

That word "**For**" at the beginning of verse 26 immediately links up the thought with what Paul just said in **3:25 - "But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian...."** - IPAD TEXT

In other words, verse 26 explains **why it is** that the law no longer serves as our tutor or custodian. The reason we are no longer "**under**" (that's an important word) the tutor (literally "**child-conductor**" in the Greek) is we are now, through faith in Jesus Christ, mature sons and daughters of God. The tutor was for a period of babysitting **before** the promised Seed of Abraham came - **Galatians 3:16 - "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say "and to seeds," as though referring to many, but referring to one, and to your seed, who is Christ."** - IPAD TEXT

We used to get babysitters for our children. It was appropriate to do so at a certain time in their development. But we don't anymore. They don't **need** babysitters anymore. This doesn't mean there was anything **wrong** with the babysitters they had. But the children have **matured**.

Probably a better illustration of that term "**child-conductor**" would be that of a full-time nanny, or day-care worker - someone **hired** by the actual guardians because they were away or unable to be with the children. But, if these child-care workers do their job, they are actually there to prepare the child for the time when they will no longer be needed. Their work points beyond themselves to the ultimate, destined maturity of the child.

This is Paul's point in the text before us today:

- 1) **THROUGH FAITH IN THE PROMISED "SEED" (JESUS CHRIST)**
WE ARE NOW SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:26 - "...for through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus."

There are two points worthy of careful study in this short verse:

- a) ***The title Paul uses to describe those of faith in Christ is “sons of God.”*** This is a classic example of why you need to be careful of gender-neutral translations that are gender-neutral just for the sake of being politically correct. Paul uses the masculine gender in this case because, in that culture, the eldest male was the first in line for all that the birthright of the family contained.

His idea is not to convey ***“maleness,”*** but to convey the idea of the fulfillment of the family inheritance or birthright. The fact that he uses the inclusive word ***“all”*** to say we are ***“all sons of God”*** proves this point. He’s talking ***inheritance***, not ***gender***.

And that’s his key thought here. He’s talking about what we ***have inherited*** in Christ Jesus. And we must never forget what this inheritance is:

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:8 - “Now the Scripture saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith and proclaimed the gospel ahead of time to Abraham, saying, All the nations will be blessed through you.”

The promised inheritance is **justification**. The law could never deliver anything of the sort to anyone. Just as a nanny or professional child-care worker can't bring the child his parent's inheritance, the law simply had nothing to **bestow** on those who were under it. It was no more **designed** to bestow an inheritance than the baby-sitter could bring a child into the parent's inheritance.

And to show the **magnitude** of what this inheritance is, Paul uses a description of us that we should find more shocking than we do. He calls us "**sons of God.**" And it's important to note that he has used that very same title twice before in this same letter - **both times referring to Jesus Christ, Himself.**

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 1:15-16 - "But when God, who from my mother's womb set me apart and called me by his grace, was pleased [16] to reveal his Son in me, so that I could preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone."

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 2:20 - "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

What these references show is the length to which the New Testament goes to *intensify* our understanding of the *depth of relationship* that has been established with Father God through Jesus Christ. True, we are definitely *not* God the Son, Jesus Christ. But, just as incredibly true, we are now placed within the same family of God. We *are* sons and daughters of God.

- b) The second point Paul wants to make here is, with such depth of mature relationship established, *there is no longer any need for a temporary baby-sitter*. The law has served its purpose once it has brought us to Christ Jesus, the Seed promised to Abraham 430 years before the giving of the law.

2) **PAUL UNDERSCORES THE PRIMARY ROLE OF BAPTISM IN THE INITIATION PHASE OF THE LIFE OF FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST**

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:27 - "For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ."

If there are churches that *overplay* the significance of baptism, making it the *means* of salvation itself, there are also far too many Christians who make too little of it.

True enough, baptism doesn't **save**. The whole tone of this epistle would make no sense if Paul were saying, "***You are saved by faith in Christ Jesus, plus nothing else. Circumcision is not necessary for salvation in Christ. What you really need is water!***".

But it is still necessary to point out that the same word "***all***" is used to describe the same group of Christians it described in **verse 26** - "***.... for through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus.***" The two groups are perfectly congruent. ***All*** of you are sons of God. ***All*** of you were baptized.

The only unbaptized convert in the whole New Testament was the thief on the cross. For everyone else, baptism was virtually a part of the conversion experience. It dramatized the events of redemption. Very significantly, in our present text, Paul describes baptism as being "***clothed with Christ***"(3:27).

We need to think about this. It is a dreadful blunder to think of baptism as nothing more than an optional religious ritual. Baptism, as an expression of personal faith, has, in Paul's mind, a great deal to do with the pursuit of separation from the world and the pursuit of holiness of life. There are two ways in which baptism is, in Paul's words, being ***clothed with Christ***:

- a) ***Negatively, being clothed with Christ means putting off the old way of life in this world***. When Paul says that baptism is being ***clothed with Christ*** we need to remember that the idea of, ***“being clothed with Christ”*** is usually used in the New Testament to show the ***antithesis*** of walking in an old, worldly lifestyle - **Romans 13:14 - “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to gratify its desires.” - IPAD TEXT**

Baptism is violated when the desires of the self reign. My participation in Christ’s cross (pictured in baptism) becomes hypocritical and empty.

- b) ***Positively, being clothed with Christ means being so infused with His life that His character becomes our own true self***. Baptism participates, according to Paul, in this process of being ***clothed*** with Christ Jesus. The actual word ***baptize*** is very closely related to the Greek word ***“bapto,”*** which means to ***“dip”*** or ***“dye.”***

This fits very well with the image Paul uses of being *clothed* with Christ Jesus. Our lives become indelibly *stained* with Christ's own life - **Galatians 2:20 - "I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."** - IPAD TEXT

You can see Paul's reminder to these Galatian Christians. It is not enough merely to *be* baptized. They must *live* baptized. The baptism in their *past* must constantly catch up to their *present*.

The outward act of baptism is not saving in effect (notice how Paul points to the *reception of the Spirit* at their conversion, not their *water baptism* - **Galatians 3:1-3**). Baptism is, none-the-less, used by the same Spirit to mobilize the drama of redemption into a living reality. Paul encouraged them not to grieve the Holy Spirit by violating their baptism - their *clothing themselves with Christ Jesus*.

3) **PAUL'S PICTURE OF THE UNITY AND THE DISTINCTIVENESS THAT EXISTS AMONG THE MEMBER OF THE BODY OF CHRIST**

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:28 - "There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus."

These words have been used and abused greatly in the history of the church. We need to be clear on what Paul *is* and *is not* saying here.

- a) ***The unity Paul describes is unity of access to salvation in Jesus Christ.*** We can *all* become children of Abraham and heirs of the promise of justification by faith alone. This has been the burden of this whole letter and Paul is putting the capstone on it right here. Neither ethnicity, social standing, nor gender have any effect on receiving the promise of justification through faith alone.
- b) ***Paul was not saying that these distinctions no longer existed in this world.*** Indeed, there were many times when Paul very proudly wore the badge of his Jewish heritage. He wrote to both slaves and slave owners on how they were to treat one another as believers.

And at least one place in the New Testament clearly states that gender distinctives are a permanent feature of life, for Christians and non-Christians alike, in this present age -

Matthew 22:30 - "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angels in heaven." -

IPAD TEXT

- c) ***While these distinctives do exist, they are never to be a source of mistreatment of division in the body of Christ.***

The unity Paul describes in this verse is not a ***man-made*** unity. It is not an ***ecumenical*** unity (“O, if only we didn’t have all these political structures and denominations! Then we’d have a truly spiritual church!”).

No. I don’t think so. What you would probably end up with - if history is repeated - would be a state run church doing the will of earthly government rather than God. The unity Paul is describing is an ***organic, spiritual*** unity, created through common participation in faith in Jesus Christ.

Consider these words: **Ephesians 4:14-16 - “Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. [15] But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into him who is the head — Christ. [16] From him the whole body, fitted and knit together by every supporting ligament, promotes the growth of the body for building itself up in love by the proper working of each individual part.” - IPAD TEXT**

Here is the *kind* of unity Paul pictures in the church. If the church is a *body*, and if Christ is the *head*, and if we are, all of us, the rest of the *parts* of that body, then the only distinction there can be among the rest of the parts is one of *function*, not *value*, nor *worth*. Not all of the parts of my body are the *same*. Nor are yours. In the same way, there are *distinctions* in the many members of the church. But there are no *favorites*. *All* are children of Abraham and sons of God.

4) **THE ONLY DISTINCTION THAT MATTERS, BOTH NOW AND ETERNALLY**

IPAD TEXT - Galatians 3:29 - “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise.”

The Bible nowhere endorses the idea that we, as human beings, are all children of God. The idea of the universal Fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man has no roots in the Christian Scriptures.

Having just outlined how the distinctions, so honored by this world, are not a factor in salvation by faith, Paul now moves on to the one distinction that is eternally sharp and discriminating - *faith in Jesus Christ, God the Son*.

Here is a place where the division counts, in God's eyes, forever. Paul has brought his tightly bound argument full circle. If believers are ***in Christ***, and if Christ is ***Abraham's seed (3:16)***, then believers - Jew, Gentile, male, female, slave and free (***3:28***) - are ***also*** Abraham's seed (***3:29***), and also, as a result, ***heirs of the promise - justification by faith (3:8)***.

Paul welds an unbreakable chain between justification before God and faith in Jesus Christ. This is the message that both ***rejoices*** the church and ***commissions*** the church. We have nothing to do but glorify God, honor one another, and win souls.