

Welcome To The Family

Text: Galatians 3.23–29

Theme: The blessings of Jesus as our Savior come to us by faith alone

Introduction — Passage under our consideration is Galatians 3.23–29

- page 1156 in those pew Bibles
- let us hear the Word of the Lord

“Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on 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. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”

(Galatians 3:23–29 ESV)

- as we look to the Word of the Lord, let’s look to the Lord of the Word in prayer

Our gracious heavenly Father,

In Your word You tell us...

“so shall My word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

(Isaiah 55:11 ESV)

To those of us who hear it and receive it by faith, You tells us...

“but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”

(Psalm 1:2–3 ESV)

So, our Father, send forth Your word now, through Your servant and cause it to work powerfully to accomplish Your purpose. Let us hear it, join it with faith, and see it produce much fruit for Your glory’s sake. Amen.

The churches in Galatia had a serious problem arising

- some false teachers had crept in & were causing quite a disturbance
- these teachers believed that Jesus was Son of God, died on cross for sins
- so far, so good
- however, they also taught, if Gentile, needed to be circumcised, follow OT Mosaic law
- otherwise, no assurance of salvation, no guarantees & need to stay separate

Paul gets wind of this and writes this letter before us

- having proven his genuine apostolic authority in order to verify the gospel he preaches...
- he sets out to put forth that good news
- a person is justified by faith alone, not by works of the law
- if you want to have a right standing in God’s eyes, your obedience won’t work
- only by trusting Jesus Christ—His perfect obedience and His work on the cross

- anything else is a false gospel

Here, in chapter 3, the apostle has labored to show three things

- first, that God made an inviolable, unchanging covenantal promise directly to Abraham
- this was ultimately fulfilled in Abraham's offspring, or seed, Jesus Christ
- second, this promise embraces both Jews and Gentiles
- this is due to God's promise to bless all nations through Abraham
- so, this gospel blessing is upon both Jews & Gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ
- third, covenant made with Moses was 430 years later & temporary
- it was made indirectly through an intermediary: angels and Moses
- all this shows that the law was never intended to give life
- rather, it was added because of transgressions
- it would reveal sin and point to the tremendous need of a Savior
- covenant to Moses intended to drive Israel to Christ by faith
- covenant to Abraham is superior because thru this the promise comes and is fulfilled

Now, in verses here, Paul makes emphatic point about nature of people of God

- thru the promise, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female
- all who are in Christ are sons of Abraham and sons of God
- Paul gloriously proclaims that all the blessings of Jesus comes to us by faith alone

He begins this proclamation by telling us...

I. THE PROMISED SCHOOLMASTER HAS COME, vv. 23–25

- Paul uses two illustrations, word pictures
- both are from life in his day & would have been easily understood

1. The Guard, v. 23

- first picture Paul uses is that of a guard
- this can be like a watchman on a tower, protecting a city from enemies without
- law is meant to keep God's people safe, pure, separate from pagan nations & practices
- this helps explain some of the laws we find confusing: meant to keep Israel pure
- but this guard is also like a prison warden & jailors
- it keeps us locked up in sin's penitentiary
- we are the inmates, law is the jail-keeper, or perhaps even our prison cell
- law functions to restrain us and punish us from breaking it
- and this is where the Judaizing false teachers went wrong
- they thought circumcision would bring freedom from Satan, sin and death
- instead, it made the imprisonment and punishment all the worse

2. The Pedagogue, v. 24

- word for guardian is word from which we get pedagogue
- a pedagogue, in Paul's day, was a hired person or a slave, set up as a tutor
- the ESV nearly gets it, NIV & KJV miss entirely, but NASB & LSB nail it on head
- law was this slave, this tutor, meant to train children of family
- meant to take child to school and schoolmaster

- meant to help with lessons, but not truly the teacher
- if child behaved, rewarded; if misbehaved, punished
- also meant to protect from bad influence of outsiders

3. The law did all this

- as tutor, would teach about coming Messiah—the Schoolmaster promised
- all the ceremonies, sacrifices, laws were pointing ahead
- law meant to show us our sinful state & great need of a perfect law-keeper
- law meant to keep one separate from the world, unstained, and pure
- but it could not save us, it was not the schoolmaster

4. The Schoolmaster has come

- “before faith came”—should have definite article “the” in place
- before THE faith came: not your subjective faith by which you are saved
- no, speaking very directly, very specifically about Christ
- before the object of your faith came, clarified in v. 24—“until Christ came”
- a pedagogue was to work himself out of a job
- when child matured, he would release him from his care
- this is God’s people when Christ finally comes
- this faith—the object of faith—has come
- under the Old Covenant, God’s people had to look ahead by faith to that Faith coming
- we now, look back, to fact of His coming and we trust Him
- Luther said it this way:

“The true use of the Law is this, that I know that by the Law I am being brought to an acknowledgment of sin and am being humbled, so that I may come to Christ and be justified by faith.”

“By faith”—this is how all these blessings in Jesus come to us, so we might be...

II. SIGNED, SEALED, AND DELIVERED, vv. 26, 27

- in Christ, we have been freed from the imprisonment of the law
- we no longer need the law to tutor us
- as if this weren’t good news enough, Paul tells us more

1. In Christ

- this is Paul’s most frequently used phrase, his favorite expression
- this is what it means to be a Christian: you are in Christ
- this is now your identity, since we love talking about identity in culture today
- “How do you identify?”
- only answer true believer should give to this is “I am in Christ” and that is all
- don’t start adding any other adjective or pronoun to this
- this singular two-word phrase established you in God’s family
- it connects you to humanity, as well as roots you in history

2. You all are sons of God

- emphasis is strongly placed upon wording here: You all...
- and Paul will make this exceedingly plain in a moment, in v. 28
- Jews, Gentiles—no difference when it comes to being in Christ
- you have been adopted; whatever you were in past now becomes covered by Jesus Christ
- sons of God, in Christ: your adoption papers have been signed by blood of Jesus

- 1689 Baptist Confession puts it like this: **God has granted that all those who are justified would receive the grace of adoption, in and for the sake of His only Son Jesus Christ. By this they—[you]—are counted among the children of God and enjoy the freedom and privileges of that relationship**
- in other words, an adopted child is a true son or daughter

3. All the blessings of adoption are ours in Christ Jesus

- given all the rights & privileges of natural-born child
- now, you have someone to call Father
- now, you have someone to care for their every need
- now, you have someone to give fatherly affection & loving discipline
- no one ever works his or her way into a family
- highest position there might simply be a servant or a slave
- you may live with the family, but you are not family...until you are adopted
- once adopted, you are a son of God

3. Sealed—by baptism

- baptism is a sign and seal of our union with Christ
- when you first trust Christ, you are baptized with the Holy Spirit
- Spirit has prepared you, brought you to Christ, and now indwells you
- but how do we see this inner working of the Spirit?
- through baptism, which declares that you belong to Christ
- you've been adopted, you in covenant relationship with Him
- man does not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God
- yet we need physical bread
- bread is not what ultimately keeps us alive; God does
- but God uses physical bread
- it is not baptism that regenerates us, saves us; but God uses water baptism to confirm
- baptism testifies to our union with Christ, remission of sins, adoption, glorification
- it obliges us to die to sin and pursue holiness
- when you are going thru dark times, doubting if you are saved or not...
- look to your baptism: what did God do through that?
- He tells you through a physical sign that you have died with Christ, been buried with Christ
- and that you also have been raised with Christ
- God seals your union with His Son

4. You are clothed with Christ— you all have put on Christ

- old expression: “clothes maketh the man”
- by faith in Jesus Christ, you are so united with Him that He has become your clothing
- He has become the garment of righteousness necessary to appear before God
- all your attempts, all your good deeds, your vain attempts at perfect, perpetual obedience...
- like wearing rotten, fetid, stinking rags from the compost heap of refuge
- but through faith in Jesus, you actually put Him on
- some churches, when person gets baptized, have a white robe to put on person
- powerful symbol of this putting on of Christ Jesus
- oh, that time would permit to speak of this glorious union with Christ
- if you but understood it by a tenth, your confidence and assurance in Him would swell

The blessings of being in Christ by faith are seen in...

III. UNION WITH CHRIST, SONS OF GOD, HEIRS WITH CHRIST, VV. 28, 29

- union with Christ makes us all one in the same family
- this blessing guarantees our inheritance
- the law could never do this; never given nor designed to do so
- only faith in that Faith that was coming—or, in our case, has come

1. One family, no distinctions

- emphasis is upon the last phrase: you are all one in Christ
- something nearly unheard of in ancient world
- ethnic divide so great as to make Grand Canyon seem but a simply step to cross
- but in Christ: neither Jew nor Greek
- the Judaizers would ruin this, destroy this, keep the wall of division up which Christ tore down
- as far as status and economic standing is concerned, that is also gone
- all part of a singular family: treat other and care for each other as such
- neither slave nor free: not about tearing down man's sin-filled stations in life
- while that is good and noble, and Christians have been ones to bring that about
- not what Paul's aim is here—no longer are you to see a difference: you are all in Christ
- and as for male and female, well, Paul isn't blurring gender roles like we see today
- the truth is, we're all in Christ

2. Sons of God

- importance of this phrase is vital
- too many in the church try to “improve” the message of Scripture
- 34 translations out of 64 on Biblegateway did this to 3.26
- change “sons” to “children”
- seem to want to correct impression by Paul that he excludes women
- essentially negates Paul's point, however
- yes, children by faith in Christ
- but we are also, very specifically, male and female, God's sons
- to call a woman a son does not negate her femininity
- what it does do is accord her the same covenantal status as a full heir in Christ
- male and female, all receive the promised inheritance in Christ
- equal status, family standing and legal standing in the covenant
- the Bible never excludes women, rather, it exalts them from the world around us
- supposed rewards of modern-day feminism and political correctness strip inheritance
- this is sad, and it is wrong
- too often, we get too interested in telling God what He should do or what we have done
- in doing so, we almost always miss what He has done for us in Christ

3. Heirs of this promise

- if we are in Christ, we are sons of Abraham
- God made His promise to Abraham & his Offspring
- this Offspring is Jesus Christ
- therefore, if we are in Christ, we are God's offspring—sons of Abraham
- this is important because only the son received the inheritance
- to say “son” has nothing to do with being masculine
- it has everything to do with receiving the inheritance promised
- everything God has ever promised to give His children will be ours
- forgiveness of sin, heaven, eternal life, and all the rest

Conclusion –What Makes Us Pleasing to God?

- We need this message and to take it to heart
- regularly need to hear about the law & its purpose
- we're all good legalists at heart
- we so often think our obedience impresses God, that He favors us due to that
- whenever we look down upon someone who does not live like we do: legalists
- we compare ourselves more favorably with our neighbors
- clothes we wear, cars we drive, books we read, music we listen to, food we eat, way we play, way we educate our children
- latch on to something, then measure others in church by our standard rather than God's
- Judaizers latched onto circumcision
- Gentiles must toe the line in order to be truly saved
- we must recognize our activities do not make us holy
- we are holy in Christ; His perfect obedience stands in our stead
- we cannot offer anything of ourselves to improve our standing with God
- our union with Christ by faith makes us pleasing to God
- our union with Christ makes us sons of God and sons of Abraham