

Galatians 3:26-29 “The Wonder of Being in Christ”

GAL 3:26-29 “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”

As we've seen over the last few weeks the Judaizers in Galatia were putting forth the case that the Gentiles needed to put on the Jewishness of their salvation experience by incorporating the law which was given by God to the Jews. In other words, they were not truly saved through faith in the Jewish Messiah until they subscribed to the law the Jewish Messiah kept.

They could not disassociate the law from the promise given by God to Abraham, who received justification apart from the law, simply by believing God at His word. And so, their argument is that as long as you identify yourself with Abraham through circumcision, as you believe on Jesus Christ, then you are a son of Abraham and therefore a son of God.

As Paul continues his reasoning on this issue of salvation, we see in verse 26 that he lays to rest what it means to be a son of God.

GAL 3:26 “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,...

You'll notice that Paul is speaking to the church in Galatia, which of course would include the Judaizers. And so, in one sense he is including the Judaizers in this broad statement, “you are all sons of God.” But the statement is qualified by, “through faith in Christ Jesus.”

And so in one breath he seemingly includes the Judaizers as sons of God, and yet in the same breath excludes them if they have not trusted in Christ alone for their salvation.

By the way, this expels the myth that anyone, no matter what religion or belief system they belong to, can be considered a child of God simply because they were created by God.

We usually hear the argument put this way. God is the Father of all mankind. This could not be further from the truth. God is not the Father of all mankind. He is the Creator of all mankind, but when

we start using the term Father in its biblical understanding of God then a distinction needs to be made.

The reason for this is because when God designates Himself Father it is always in the context of an intimate righteous relationship He has with people. That relationship, since the fall of man, is only available through faith in God and His promises of reconciliation to mankind.

Nowhere in the word of God is the term Father, as it relates to our heavenly Father, meant to include every single human being without exception. In fact, the first time that the designation of Father is used, as it relates to God, is when Moses is about to die. In what is referred to as the song of Moses, he rebukes Israel, the chosen people of God, for being a stiff-necked and rebellious people.

DEU 32:6 "Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?"

Here, both the terms Father and Creator are in the same sentence. But it is the term Father which is reserved for Israel alone at this time since they have been chosen by God for a special relationship. And notice, that despite the fact that they are rebuked for being rebellious, Moses still regards them as children of God.

Why? Because it is God who has designated them His children through the promise given to Abraham. And this is why the Lord, when He is about to bring the last curse on Pharaoh and Egypt, makes it clear that Israel, not the Egyptians, share this special relationship with God who is creator of all.

EXO 4:22-23 "Then say to Pharaoh, 'This is what the LORD says: Israel is my firstborn son, and I told you, "Let my son go, so he may worship me." But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son.'"

God is making the distinction between two nations, and by inference all nations, in contrast to Israel. And yet, what is interesting is that despite the fact that God has placed His love on Israel collectively, it was always meant to manifest itself on an individual basis as each Jew in Israel was to believe, even as did Abraham.

And so, in this sense, for every Jew individually to be able to call God Father they must believe on the promises of God. They cannot

claim to know God as Father if they have not believed on the promises of God which establish them as children of God. This is the point Jesus made to the Jews of His day.

JOH 8:40-44 "As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does." "We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

Jesus is making it abundantly clear that whether you are a Jew or a Gentile, unless you embrace Jesus Christ by faith as Lord and Savior, you cannot possibly know God as Father, which means you cannot know God as Savior, which is the only basis for an eternal relationship with our heavenly Father.

But if we have embraced Christ by faith alone then we are assured of this special relationship which is everlasting because God has given us His Spirit in whom He has sealed us for the day of redemption. Paul addresses this special relationship when writing to the Romans.

ROM 8:15-16 "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

And so, the message to the Judaizers is clear. When it comes to being a child of God becoming more like a Jew will not save you. Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ alone will.

GAL 3:27 "...for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

This is an interesting phrase in that Paul is using an image here of being intimately identified with all Christ has done for us to the degree that we have put Him on as putting on a garment.

Let's look at this: "...for all of you who were baptized into Christ..."

Now, at first glance we might be tempted to think Paul is talking about water baptism. And though the application of water baptism may not be totally divorced from Paul's thinking here, this is not his intent.

The context is dealing with an intimate relationship with God through Christ whereby we can call our Lord and Creator, Abba, Father. Simply being water baptized does not bring this relationship into existence; belief in Jesus Christ does.

And so, what Paul is talking about here is the type of baptism which actually creates this everlasting relationship. Now, remember that the word baptism by itself does not necessarily refer to water baptism. The word baptism, simply put, infers three things: union, fellowship and identification with something or someone.

And so, the context determines how the word baptism is to be used. In our text this morning when Paul speaks of being baptized into Christ he is talking about being identified with what Christ did for us on the cross to the extent that this identification allows us to say, that when Christ died we died with Him as we placed our faith in Him.

And so, we have an intimate union with His redemptive work on our behalf as we are identified with Him and now can rejoice that we have an intimate fellowship with him. Union, fellowship and identification are essentially what baptism infers here.

In fact, you and I were actually baptized when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Our water baptism, which came later, simply spoke to what already happened to us spiritually when we believed.

And our passage makes this clear. Verse 27 "... for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

Here Paul makes baptism into Christ the equivalent of being clothed with Christ. Now, what does he mean by this? He means that Christ's life now becomes united to us. This union is so close that it is like putting on a piece of clothing, which no one can take off. Everything that Jesus did for us becomes ours, just as if he did it.

As John MacArthur explains, "whatever the Lord Jesus is has become the believer's. Because Christ has the love of the Father, so do believers. Because Christ has full access to the Father, so do

believers. And because Christ has the full resources of the Father, so do believers.”

Paul explains this to the Romans.

ROM 6:3-5 “Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.”

In other words, we are clothed in His redemptive work. Everything about His salvation for us is now ours by faith in Him.

It's interesting that Job uses this metaphor as he compares righteousness and clothing.

JOB 29:14 “I put on righteousness as my clothing; justice was my robe and my turban.”

He is saying that clothing has covered his body in the same way that God has covered his sin and given him a righteousness which only comes through faith.

The prophet Isaiah also uses this imagery.

ISA 61:10 “I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

Isaiah makes the case that this clothing is something which belongs to God and then is given to His people as a gift, which is what salvation is.

When speaking to the Romans Paul goes past the metaphor and directly to where this righteousness, which clothes us from above, comes from.

ROM 3:22-24 “This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

To be justified through Christ is to put on the righteous garments Christ has given us which clothe us from the nakedness of our own

sin. Again, in the context of addressing the Judaizers Paul is sending the message that we can't clothe ourselves in our own righteousness, or in some good work we do from the law.

In fact, most of us are familiar with the passage which addresses this concept.

ISA 64:6 "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags [or clothing]; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away."

So, as we continue with our text Paul, now having made the case that righteousness doesn't come from the law but through faith in Christ, moves to the next logical conclusion: this righteousness is made available to everyone, not just the Jew, which is what the Judaizers were contending.

GAL 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

First, let me point out what Paul is not saying here. He is not saying that all distinctions have blurred into one essence. He is not saying that there aren't people out there who are truly Jewish by birth, or truly distinctive in their own nationality, whatever that may be.

Italians are not French. Germans are not Chinese. As far as there being no distinction between slave or free, just turn to the letter Paul wrote to Titus regarding how slaves should consider their station in life.

TIT 2:9-10 "Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive."

Does this sound like there is no distinction between slave and master? Of course there's a distinction. The same is true of male and female. You don't need to be a rocket scientist to know that there are huge distinctions between the sexes.

What Paul means by all of this is that while there may be distinctions in this life, there are no distinctions regarding who can have eternal life and how that life is obtained. There are no distinctions from God's perspective when it comes to how He treats His children.

In fact, this is the point Paul made to Philemon, who was a Christian and a slave owner. The slave Onesimus ran away from Philemon and ended up on Paul's front door step. Through a series of events Paul leads Onesimus to Christ and uses this slave in his ministry. But Paul realizes he needs to go back to Philemon. But here's what Paul tells Philemon.

PHM 1:15-17 "Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good - no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord. So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me."

In other words, despite how Onesimus is still a slave he must now be viewed from God's perspective and that is a brother in Christ in the body where he may now serve. In fact, it would not have been uncommon for a slave in the body of Christ to be a respected elder or deacon who was actually in authority over his own master who may have been a new convert.

As a mere slave he must come under the direction of his master. But if that slave was an elder that master must submit to disciplinary action, for example, if it were warranted, where the master was on the receiving end of such discipline.

It would certainly be an interesting relationship, but it was to be a relationship where both master and slave were to do their jobs or carry out their ministries to the glory of God, where both saw themselves as brothers in Christ, being part of the same family and thus to love each other as fellow believers.

And for the sake of the Galatians where the Judaizers were trying to place themselves both politically and spiritually over the Gentiles, Paul puts a stop to that by saying to the Judaizers, "your station in life, and the lack of the Jewish religious background of the Gentiles, do not come into play from God's perspective when it comes to salvation."

And the reason for that is because everyone is on equal footing when being justified before God is concerned. Whether you're a woman or a man, a slave or master, Jew or Gentile one is not more saved than the other. If you're the President of the United States or the janitor who cleans the White House, you're both saved the same way and part of the same household of faith.

Now, granted, within the body of Christ there will still be distinctives in regards to gifts of the Spirit one may possess, or the authority one is given in the church. But not even the Pastor of a church can say he is more saved than someone else in his church.

Justification is justification for all people who believe. We have all believed in only one Jesus who can save and we are all filled and indwelt by the same Spirit. God plays no favorites from that perspective.

And so, all people, from whatever background, can take heart in the truth that God is no respecter of persons when it comes to redemption, and likewise God's people are not to be respecters of people either, simply because they may be different, or from a different ethnic background.

I've mentioned this before but God never makes a distinction between people based on the color of their skin. Nowhere in the bible do we see God making distinctions of people based on something that superficial. He mentions the names of nations or people, [the Amelikes, the Ammorites, the Canaanites, etc.], but it's always in reference to their position before Him, as accepters or rejecters of the one true God.

And so, Paul comforts the Gentile believers in Galatia by encouraging them that despite their background in paganism, and the fact that they don't have the formal training in the law like the Judaizers, they are still loved by God and are as much a child of God by faith in Christ as any Jew who has truly trusted Christ as Lord and Savior.

Remember, "for God so loved the world.

GAL 3:29 "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Paul is saying to the Galatians, "if you have believed on the Lord Jesus then your standing before God is identical with any Jewish believer, in that we all share in the inheritance of Christ. Our faith in Christ and not our keeping of the law is what gives us this status, contrary to what the Judaizers were telling these Gentiles.

Simply belonging to the race of the Jews is what these Judaizers were glorying in. Paul turns it around and says to be a true Jew you need to belong to the spiritual seed of Abraham through faith in Christ. In fact, the special status Israel once shared as being the chosen people is now shared by the rest of the world in one sense.

EPH 3:6 “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

Being sharers together in the promise of Christ we all attain the status of being a child of the living God and sharing in the promises that any heir would. Paul put it this way when writing to the Romans.

ROM 8:16-17 “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs -heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

Being an heir of Christ doesn't guarantee that we will never have to suffer for Christ, but any suffering eternally outweighs the glory we will share in the presence of our God and Savior.

Part of the inheritance we will share in has to do with the promise of life eternal in the presence of God as we partake of all the blessings of His kingdom and all that that entails. The half-brother of Jesus alludes to this in his letter.

JAM 2:5 “Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?”

Jesus sums it up best when touching on what it will mean to be part of this inheritance.

REV 21:3-7 “And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”

This is what it means to be a son and daughter of God; to have Him as our Father who loves us with an everlasting love and to know that nothing will separate us from His love. How then should we live as believers in Christ? Paul puts it this way.

COL 3:11 -15 “Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all. Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”