

June 10, 2007

“Don’t You Know Who You Are?”
Galatians 3:26-29

FCF: Not knowing who we are “in Christ”

PROPOSITION: (anchor) Because we are no longer “under the law” but “in Christ,”
(magnet) our lives can and must be new in every way.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

“Toy Story 2” – Andy has left for Cowboy Camp and left Woody, his toy cowboy, behind to wonder if he will be abandoned for the next high-tech fad. Woody later becomes part of a toy collection. He is “the rootin’est, tooin’est, sheriff in the West” from the old TV show, “Woody’s Roundup.” All over the room, there are lunch boxes, kids’ toys, record albums, even a yo-yo with his likeness. Woody is stunned. At which point, one of the characters asks, “*Didn’t you know? You’re valuable property!*”

The same could be asked of us. Didn’t you know? Don’t you know who you are?

SCRIPTURE READING: Galatians 3:19-29

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON INTRODUCTION:

Looking back over Paul’s argument, the question at hand is, “*Who has bewitched you?*” Why have you fallen into this futile, vain, empty way of pursuing a relationship, a secure standing with God? In 1:6, he speaks of this as being an act of treason. “*Do you not know who and whose you are?*” In 3:1, he speaks of it as an act of foolishness. “*Do you not know what Jesus has done for you?*” J. B. Phillips paraphrases it this way (READ Phillips quote), “*O you dear idiots of Galatia...surely you can’t be so idiotic!*”

It’s as though they were under a spell, asleep at the wheel, needing to be woken up. We know such danger. “Driving under the influence” comes in many ways – alcohol, drugs, and fatigue. You can be so tired, you slip into a zone. You look back and can’t remember parts of the journey. That’s not good. You needed to be jarred awake.

Which is exactly what Paul is doing here – jarring us from this spell. In vv.19-25, he has set forward the purpose of the law – to make us worse so that Jesus can make us better. We learn who we were while living under it. We were prisoners locked away. We were minors closely guarded. But that, Paul says to his readers then and now, is all a thing of the past. Something has happened. We have been set free and come of age.

How can this be? What has happened? (READ Galatians 3:25-26) Faith has come. The fog has lifted. The mist has cleared. The light of gospel has dawned in our hearts, the news delivered and embraced that this relationship, this standing with God is brought about and secured by God “by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.” This passage is filled with explicit references to Christ and especially to our “union with Christ” – that the believer in Christ has been made one with Christ. We don’t stand on our own as solitary men and women. We stand with Him and He with us. He is our representative before God and our very life as well. We are one with Him. What He did for us has been applied to us. One with Him in His death, resurrection, and ascension.

Those are the facts of this union – a union with real effects and implications. And they are glorious, wondrous to behold. So much so that, as we grow in our understanding of this union, we will see that our lives can and must take on a new shape in every way.

I. CHILDREN OF GOD

After all, what does Paul say? The first thing – so stunning he goes on chapter 4 to unpack it – is that we have been made children of God (READ Galatians 3:25-27).

A) *Adopted through Faith*

What Paul is saying here is that through faith we have been adopted.

1. Legal declaration

A change has occurred in our legal standing. No longer orphans, we are God's children.

2. Real implications

This is a legal declaration with profound and powerful implications. Listen to this beautiful summary found in the Westminster Shorter Catechism ([READ WSC:34](#)):

What is adoption? Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.

Do you hear what's being said here? We have been made children of God! Given the same rights and privileges of a "natural-born" child. The same access to the Father as the Son. The same fatherly affection and discipline. A full share of the family inheritance.

B) *Baptized into Christ*

And to press the point, Paul then goes on to remind us of our baptism.

1. Symbolic act

That sacramental act, instituted by Christ Himself, administered with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Signifying our washing from sin. Sealing us, much like an official mark on a public document, confirming we belong to God.

2. Dramatic break

All undertaken to show forth a dramatic break from the old – our dependence on our self-righteousness and our estrangement from God. And then an embracing by faith of the new – Christ's cleansing us of our sin and clothing us with His righteousness. A dramatic break has taken place. Paul expresses it beautifully. We have "put on Christ."

Illustration:

Which may well be an allusion to the practice of the early church for baptism. When adult converts came for baptism, they stripped off their clothes. Then, once they had been baptized, they were handed a white robe to symbolize their new life in Christ. A tangible reminder to them and to all of the reality of what has taken place in Christ.

Application:

Which means that if you have placed your trust in Christ, if His work for you is the sole basis for your hope, something has happened. Something has changed. You are His – His child. You are no longer an orphan. You are a son or a daughter. Christian, do you know who you are? Do you know the intimacy with the Father that is yours? You need not go through life crippled in thinking there is really no one there for you.

You are a child of God, cleansed and clothed by Christ. Know who you are. Know what He's done. Know a dramatic change has taken place between you and Him and that He has secured this relationship. And how? Because by grace through faith, we are no longer "under law" but "in Christ." So our lives can and must then be lived anew.

II. ONE WITH EACH OTHER

But Paul doesn't stop there. In Christ, a change has taken place not just between us and God but between us and each other as well ([READ Galatians 3:28](#)).

A) *Real Distinctions*

Now we need to be clear. Paul is not saying all distinctions have been destroyed.

1. Race

Race is still there. Skin color is what it is – black, brown, yellow, red, or white. .

2. Rank

Rank is still there. Cultural and economic backgrounds are not washed away.

3. Gender

Gender is still there. Men are to be treated as men and women as women.

B) But without Divisions

What Paul is speaking to is not the destruction of the distinctions among us but the divisions between us. And these three things – race, rank, and gender – are not to rend asunder that which God has joined together. In Christ, we are one with each other.

1. Race

Racially we are one – not the same but equal. Obviously, Paul is addressing the issue of the divide between Jew and Gentile. God had called and marked out Abraham and his descendants for a purpose. But that purpose was fulfilled with the coming of Christ – the savior of all the nations. So clearly, then and now, there was to be no racial divide.

2. Rank

Socially we are one – not the same but equal. Circumstances of birth, wealth, privilege, and education are real but must never divide us. Castes and snobbery are ruled out.

3. Gender

Gender-wise we are one – not the same but equal. This is worth stressing in our time and place for there is such confusion on this point. Women were often despised, exploited, and ill-treated in the ancient world. And Paul is speaking emphatically against that here.

No matter what distinctions there are among us, we are equal in our need of Jesus, equal in our inability to earn or deserve His favor, and equal in receiving His grace.

Illustration:

We see something of this in the way Jesus treated the woman at the well in John 4. I encourage you to read that passage with care when you get home. She was an immoral Samaritan woman – an outcast in every way. But that did not stop Jesus from loving her and dying for her sins. And we are to love one another in much the same way.

Application:

For we are no longer “under the law” but “in Christ.” Which means our lives can and must be lived in a whole new way. Because of the changes God has brought, we are to live as strangers to Him and one another no more. We are now sons and daughters, brothers and sisters – family. Sons and daughters, brothers and sisters – family.

This begs a question. From whom within this family are you estranged? From whom within this family are you estranged? God is calling you to address that. A change has taken place. He has made us one. That then brings changes in how we live.

III. HEIRS OF THE PROMISE

One last thing – as though all this wasn’t enough. In Christ, we have been made children of God, one with each other, and heirs of the promise (**READ Galatians 3:29**).

A) A Lasting Inheritance

What is he saying? Paul is referring here to some things he’s said before.

1. Abraham’s offspring

We are said to be “Abraham’s offspring.” A few weeks ago when we were looking at vv.15-18, we saw that in that context, this collective noun was used in the singular referring to Jesus – the offspring of Abraham par excellence. Here Paul is using the term in a different way, in the plural, referring to us as believers in Jesus. That is, in Christ, we belong to God. In Christ, we belong to each other. In Christ, we belong to Abraham.

2. Abraham’s inheritance

And, belonging to Abraham, we are heirs then of his inheritance. Which ultimately would include forgiveness of sin, the promise of heaven, eternal life, and all things.

B) *A Place in Time*

As “heirs according to promise,” we have been given a lasting inheritance. And with that, a place in time as well – a place, a mission, a purpose, a calling in this life.

1. Blessed by God’s grace

We have spoken of this before – it’s part of the vision of this church family and our understanding of who we are. With Abraham, we have been blessed by God’s grace.

2. To be a blessing for God’s glory

Why? We have been blessed by God’s grace to be a blessing for God’s glory.

Illustration:

To put it another way, we are not to live as spoiled little heiresses such as we hear far too much about in the news these days. We have not been given it all as though it’s all for ourselves. No, a thousand times no! We are heirs, not spoiled little heiresses.

Application:

Listen! We have been set free and set forward. Blessed by God’s grace to be a blessing for God’s glory. Which means our attitudes and actions involving the things our culture and we ourselves become so obsessed with – money, sex, security, and relationships – must look dramatically different in two ways. Different from the way they once did and different from the way of those around us. Our agenda in all these things is to be set by the Word of God alone and our actions driven by the grace of God alone. For by grace we are no longer “under the law” but “in Christ” and heirs with Him.

CONCLUSION:

Coming back to where we started, these things are too glorious, too wondrous, to allow ourselves to become “bewitched.” Indeed, they are so glorious, so wondrous, that it is the reminder of them the Lord can use to snap us out of it and wake us from the spell.

It reminds me of a scene in C. S. Lewis’ *The Silver Chair*. Eustace and Jill have been sent to find Prince Rilian. Their journey brings them into contact with the marshwiggles, Puddleglum, and into the realm of the Queen of the Underland, a powerful enchantress. Seeing the threat the children pose to her plans, she uses her magic to convince them there is no other world but the dark barren one beneath. And she nearly succeeds. That is, until Puddleglum thrusts his foot into the fire, jarring him awake. At which point Lewis adds this beautiful gem of insight as the narrator ([READ Lewis quote](#)), “*There is nothing like a good shock of pain for dissolving certain kinds of magic.*”

We need just such a “good shock of pain” to dissolve this spell. We need to hear what Paul is saying here – that the benefits of union with Christ are real but that they come not through works but through faith. And then, hearing that, we are set free from the spell, able to begin and grow not just in the fact of this union but its effects. Its height – complete reconciliation to God who is now our Father. Its breadth – a sweet bond with believers wherever we are in whatever circumstances may come. And its length – a joining into a long line of followers of Christ throughout the course of human history.

Christian, don’t you know who you are? Seeker, inquirer of these things, throat parched from the search, don’t you long to taste something of this fountain? To be able to say ([READ Stott quote](#)) “*In Christ I am a son of God. In Christ I am united to all the redeemed people of God, past, present and future. In Christ I discover my identity. In Christ I find my feet. In Christ I come home.*” May it be increasingly so for us all.

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