

Galatians 3:23-29 - We are connected to Jesus! Pentecost 5/Picnic July 14, 2019

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Grace and peace are from God our Father solely because of our Lord and Savior Jesus, our Brother. Amen
God's Word to keep us connected to Christ is from Galatians 3:23-29

These are your words heavenly Father. Assure us of our connection to you. Your Word is truth! Amen.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Who are you? You might ask that question of people you meet today. Some describe themselves by what they do: I'm a student, teacher, in business or in a factory, a nurse or a dispatch for the police. I work in retail or on a farm. We can also describe ourselves by our relationships. I'm a mom or dad or child. But, that doesn't fully describe us. Our work or activities change in time, but it doesn't change the essence of who we are. As Christians, every one of us can claim the same family and purpose. We are the children of God. We live to honor our God who made us and loved us in Christ. We are certain, since through faith

We are connected to Jesus!

First, He is the source of our relationship with God. Paul was writing in our verses about religious Christians who had a Jewish background. They taught that being connected to Jesus was basic Christianity. But by following old Jewish ceremonies, they would reach a higher level of Christianity. These Judaizers wanted to restore things like eating only certain "clean" foods, limiting work on the Sabbath, having only the priests pray to God, and other rituals. Paul knew that these rituals had a place before Christ came. He wrote, "*Before this faith came* (that is: before Christ accomplished His saving work), *we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed*" (v.23). Each law was given to prepare people for the coming of Jesus.

Paul was not against the Law of God as long as it was used in the proper way. He wrote, "*The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ*" (v.24). God's law teaches us how to live a holy life, but it doesn't give us the power to live it! The law of God does not help us get rid of our sins. It leads us to see that we have sinned against God more than we thought. It is impossible to save ourselves by works. Either people depend on Christ alone to make them one with God or they have nothing to save them. There was no in-between. Many choose the law, since it appealed to their sinful nature to be able to add to their salvation. But, if they are following the 10 Commandments or any religious traditions in order to be saved, they will lose everything if they lose their connection to Jesus.

When Paul wrote that the Law was put in charge until Christ came, he was referring to when a wealthy family hired a servant to be a guardian for a young son. The guardian followed the child around to keep him from harm or getting mischief. He may have even set up rules for the child to live by. But, once the child came of age, the guardian was dismissed. The child was free to live on his own. So, Paul wrote, the law served as a kind of guardian. It prepared people for something better, but it didn't give them what was better. No law can do that. Only Christ!

Paul was saying that our identity with God does not depend on what we do, but on what Jesus did. Paul did not write, "You are sons of God because you obeyed the rules or followed its regulations." He wrote, "*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*" (v.26). Throughout history, there has only been one way for people to be saved. It was by faith in God's promised Savior. God promised Adam and Eve to crush the devil's head by a descendent of Eve. They believed and were saved. God promised Abraham that in his descendent would be a blessing for all nations. Abraham believed the promise and it

was counted to him as holiness. We Christian today have the same faith that connects us to Jesus. He promised, *“The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost”* (Luke 19:10). The Bible tells us that Jesus died to take away all sins. We believe that promise in Christ and are forgiven! By faith in Jesus we have complete peace with God. No matter how troubling the world is around us, God loves us and cares for us through the peace established by Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

Second, faith alone in Christ brings God’s blessing as a gift. One way that God connected us to Jesus was through our baptisms. Paul wrote, *“All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ”* (v.27). Some claim that baptism is our work for God. But nowhere does the Bible describe baptism as our work. It is an action by us, but God is at work. Through baptism we receive Christ’s blessings through faith. The Jews had washing ceremonies. But Paul wrote to people who had been baptized not into Moses’ laws or Jewish works. They were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit into the Christian faith. The Bible connects baptism with the Gospel not the law. In Christian baptism the Holy Spirit connects us by faith to Christ. When we are connected to Christ, we not only have forgiveness of all our sins, we are clothed in Christ. When God looks at us, all He sees is Christ’s perfect life covering us like a garment of salvation! Remember of lesson of the Prodigal son. When he was sorry for his sins and asked for forgiveness, the father welcomed him home by putting on him the clothes of a son.

God sees us as His *“sons”* (v.26). In the Greek language there is a general word for children and then there is a specific word for sons who will inherit. When Paul described us, he used the same word that God used for Jesus as His own Son. Paul’s verse specifically used the word *“sons”*, the ones who will inherit heaven with Jesus instead of eternal separation from Him. What a great difference Christ makes!

Even though Paul calls us *“sons”* he goes on to say that these blessings are not limited to men or a certain class of people. He wrote, *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (v.28). As true sons we will equally inherit everything that God has given to Jesus. Paul wrote in *Romans 8:32*: *“He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”* We all have access to the Father who promises to love and care for us. By God’s law we knew of heaven and God’s love, but we had no right to claim it. Now that we are connected by the gospel to Christ by faith, and all He won is credited to us!

Paul concludes, *“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise”* (v.29). Paul was saying: If you are sons of God, then you are also sons of Abraham who will inherit what the Father promised. People didn’t have to follow an extra set of Jewish laws to obtain this inheritance. Paul says that the real relationship to Abraham lies not in family connections or works but by faith in Christ. So, who are we? It isn’t our family connections or what we do! It is about our connection to Christ. As His brothers and sisters by faith, we are the forgiven children of God. We are inheritors of a fortune so great the earth cannot contain it. It’s kept in heaven for us! By faith in Christ, when we leave this world we will instantly have eternal life and live with Jesus forever. Amen.