

Galatians 3:23-29 Live as the Children of God! Pentecost 5 / Father's Day June 19, 2016

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Grace and peace from God our Father and from our risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

God's Word to keep us connected to Christ is from Galatians 3:23-29

These are Your words heavenly Father. Your Word is truth! Amen

Dear Christian Friends,

What is it that defines who we are? We're celebrating Father's Day remembering that families have had a great influence determining who we are today. Also, what we do in the family or at work or in the community helps determine our status. And, all of us are human. Despite the false teaching of evolution that we are just a higher form of animal, God has instilled in us the true sense that we are uniquely His creation. At creation, God established a relationship for us to be children of our heavenly Father. Sadly, that relationship was destroyed by sin. But, God's Son assumed a human nature to re-establish a living relationship between us and God. Let us

Live as the Children of God!

First, we can't forget the source of our relationship. There were Jewish Christians at Paul's time who taught that Christ was not the only basis of our being children of God; they wanted to include God's laws. They mixed together Christ and ceremonial Old Testament laws to define themselves as high level Christians. Paul had earlier described to the Galatians that God gave Old Testament ceremonies to point ahead to the coming Savior or to show the need for a Savior. So, the Sabbath rest pointed to Jesus who gives eternal rest. The priesthood and sacrifices pointed ahead to Jesus who made the ultimate sacrifice by giving His life as a payment for sin. Dietary laws were given to set God's people apart from the heathen peoples who worshipped false gods. So, bread without yeast symbolized a life devoted to God without compromise. Jesus called Himself the Bread of life. (*John 6:35*) The lamb of the Passover pointed to Jesus, the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. (*John 1:29*)

There was no reason for believers after Christ to follow the ceremonial laws. Jesus had fulfilled those laws by His living and dying. Even the temple was only a model of what God has in store for believers in heaven. (*Hebrews 8:5*) So, Paul was saying, don't let ceremonies and works define who you are as Christians. He wrote, "*Before this faith came [Before Christ came], we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed*" (v.23) The laws were like a guard keeping people from falling away into other sins. To this day, the moral law does not help us get rid of our sins. The law was given so we might better understand our sin and our need for Jesus. As Christians we want to use the law to guide us so we can better serve our God; but every time we seek to follow the law our conscience tells us that we have fallen short of God's perfect will. Certainly we want to follow God's laws to honor and thank Him. But, following God's laws does define who we are as children of God, because we are still sinners.

Paul wrote, "*The law was put in charge to lead us to Christ so we might be justified by faith.*" (v.24) Paul pictured the law as a guardian of a young child. The guardian's job was to keep the child from harm or mischief. He set up rules for the child to live by until the boy became an adult. Paul wrote, "*Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.*" (v. 25) The law readied them for the Gospel!

Christ is the only source for our relationship with God. He has defined who we are as His people. Paul wrote, "*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*" (v.26) The word "son" is a legal term describing a person with the full right of inheritance. He has no need for a guardian over him. He is free to live as he pleases. So, no matter who we are in life: father, mother, children or in any vocation, we are free to live as the children of God. How did we become His children? Was it through hours of work?

Was it through prayer? We are saved by grace through faith in Christ worked by the Holy Spirit. We believe the Word that tells us Jesus is God and man in one person. He was sinless in our place and became the perfect sacrifice. Instead of being enemies of God and spiritually dead in sin under the law, by faith in Christ we are the children of God seeking to freely speak and do what honors Him

Second, in Christ we have God's blessings. In order to bless children, God commands parents to bring up their children in the instruction of the Lord. That includes baptism. Paul wrote, *"As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."* (v.27) Parents may have given children special clothes to wear at their baptism. But, God gave us lasting clothes in baptism. He clothes us with the perfection of Christ and His complete forgiveness won on the cross, which we receive through faith in Him.

Some types of clothes show who we are: a sports fan or pro-life or Christian. When the prodigal son was welcomed home by his father, he received a ring on his finger, sandals on his feet, and a robe, which showed that he was a son and not a slave. Spiritually, the clothes we have from Christ, determine who we are. Isaiah wrote, *"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD... For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness."* (Isaiah 61:10). We are covered in Christ's perfection and with the strength of Him who won the victory over sin and death. They are all gifts of God.

Another blessing in Christ is that God receives us as we are. He doesn't judge fathers as worthy of heaven because they were perfect dads. God doesn't choose anyone because of their status, nationality, or by any standard of human judgment. Paul wrote, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* (v.28) As far as salvation is concerned; we are all equal in standing with God. It's humbling to think that in God's eyes we are all sinners. But, God led us to repent of our sins and believe in Christ's forgiveness to be saved. The Bible states, *"The same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"* (Romans 10:12)

Finally, Paul calls us blessed children of Abraham. He wrote, *"If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."*(v.29) The amount of an inheritance in life depends on who your relatives are and what they accomplished in life. With Abraham, it wasn't what he did, but what God had promised him: that his name would be great, he would inherit a land, and he would be a father to many nations. The Jews claimed that only those who followed their rules could be considered children of Abraham. But God promised blessings to all who have the faith of Abraham. The Bible states, *"Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."*(Romans 4:3)

Today, we are celebrating Father's Day and the relationship that God has established in families to bring them His blessing. Today, we also celebrate that in Christ we are part of the family of God. A place has been reserved for us in heaven through our risen Savior! May parents continue to remember who they are in Christ and gladly share that good news with their children and all people! Amen.