

We Are One – Gal 3:23-29

Gal 3:23-29

How many of you remember some of your babysitters growing up?

Anyone have a babysitter you *didn't* like? Somebody you thought was mean? Me too
They were my brothers – 6 and 8 years older than me

In fact, they were the *only* babysitters I remember growing up; Glorified nannies, really
And during the summers, when my Mom went on her Avon route, they were in charge
Which meant sometimes it was good, and sometimes it was bad; Mostly b/c I was bad

And though I hated them to the extreme some days, their oversight was absolutely necessary; B/c I was a little *fart*; That's what they called me
And they were right; I was a master antagonist, constantly looking for trouble
And their role, was to reign me in; Keep me fed, safe, and out of trouble – without killing me

Which is *exactly*, what the OT Law did, before *Jesus* came; Paul's topic here in v23-24
[23] *Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. [24] So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.* IOW . . .

Before Christ, the Law was like a nanny (v23-24)

Or, using *my* example, the Law was like my brothers, who imprisoned me in our house,
until Mom got home and vindicated me; Not b/c I was good, but b/c I was the favorite
They were the nanny, and as far as I was concerned, she was Jesus

And so too the Law; Babies require sitters, kids require nannies, and before Christ, *we*
required the Law; To confine us and hem us in, until Jesus came; Look at v23 again

[23] *Now before faith came* [that's faith in Jesus *Christ* as he just said in v22; Before Christ], *we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.* That makes it sound like the Law was a *prison* warden, doesn't it?
Confining us and holding us in its grip by the *power* of sin, and the *consequences* of sin

➤ But that's only *half* the picture; Look at v24
[24] *So then* [Paul says], *the law was our guardian until Christ came*; Our *guardian*; A word in Paul's day, that conveyed a *book's* worth of information
B/c guardians, or *pedagogues* as they were called, were slaves appointed by wealthy families, to raise their children from age 6 to 16
So that morning to night, each kid was under the constant care and supervision of their personal guardian
Part babysitter, part chaperone, part disciplinarian, and part provider

They would teach the kids morals, help them with their social skills, protect them from unwanted *sexual* advances – like from other men in the public baths . . .
And sometimes, they would even *punish* the kids

So the *other* half of the picture, that really incorporates the *whole* picture, is that *the law was our guardian*; Sometimes *restraining* God's people . . .
And sometimes *warning* them, but always *protecting* them and *guiding* them

➤ And it did that, *until Christ came*
The Law acted as a nanny, until the *parents* came home
Until the *master* of the house took over; Until the *author* of the Law stepped in
At which point the *Law's* supervision *ceased*, and Christ's *Lordship*, began

Why? That we might be declared *righteous*, once and for all; And no longer be called little farts; That's the idea
The law was our guardian until Christ came [v24], *in order that we might be justified*;
Declared and considered righteous in God's sight

➤ How so? *By faith*; Last 2 words of the sentence; *The law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.*
Not that Abraham and all the *other* OT saints weren't justified by *faith*; They were; Paul's clear about that (Gal 3:5-6; Rom 4:3,9,22)
But that *their* faith was in God's *spoken* word, while ours is in God's *Living Word* – Jesus; That's how *we're* justified; That's how *we're* saved

Or to say it another way, OT believers were saved by faith in God's *promises*, while we're saved by faith in God's *fulfilment*
Or more *specifically*, they were saved through faith in God's promised *Messiah*, while we're saved by faith in God's *revealed* Messiah (Heb 11:13,26-27,39; Rom 3:25-26)

The point being – the Law served a vital purpose before Christ, acting as a nanny

➤ [25] *But now that faith has come* [v25], *we are no longer under a guardian* [we're no longer *under* the OT Law], [26] *for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*

Before Christ, the Law was like a nanny, but . . .

With Christ, we're part of God's family (v25-27)

Now that faith has come, now that we can trust in *Jesus* to save us . . .

We're no longer treated like orphans under the supervision of a nanny, but sons and daughters under the blessing of God; Part of his family
That's what it *means* to be *sons of God* (26)

➤ And just to make sure we don't error toward universalism, the belief that *everybody's* a part of the family b/c Jesus came – he adds the words *through faith* again; V26
It's *faith* in Jesus that makes us one of God's own; Not just his presence
It's being *in* Christ that guarantees a spot at the table; In *relationship* with him
That's how you become a son or daughter; That's the *entrance* requirement; Faith

And what a status it leads to; None greater in fact

As proud as I am to be called Buck Willey's son; With all the integrity, hard work, and humility he was known for; As good as I had it growing up; As loved as I was and am
It's nothing, nothing, compared to being a part of *God's* family; Known and received as one of *his* sons; And living it out with others, right here in our church

With Christ – we, are, family; *God's* family; Sons and daughters of the Most High
With no status, membership, or identity that's higher, better, or sweeter
What a treasure; What a privilege; What a blessing

➤ And the *ground* for such inclusion, the *reason* we're part of God's family, is found in v27 – For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. [27] For [or b/c] as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.
So faith is the *key* to the household of God, and *Jesus* is the door; The *means* of entrance; First, last, and always

➤ Now, there's a *lot* here, but let me start with what's *not* here
What's *not* here, is baptism; He's not talking about baptism; The place we automatically tend to go, just b/c he uses the word; And in so doing, we miss the meaning
If he were talking about baptism proper, he would have said something like – “As many of you as were *baptized* have put on Christ”

But he didn't; He said – *as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*
Meaning, whoever has been brought under Christ's *influence*, have taken on his identity
That's what the word *baptize* means, generically; To bring under the influence of
Just like we're brought under the influence of *water*, in the *ordinance* of baptism;
Symbolizing outwardly, what happened inwardly
That we were brought under the influence of *Jesus*
That we are in *him*, just like we're in the *water*

So Paul's statement here isn't about baptism, but salvation; Salvation
When we put our faith in him, we are brought under his influence; Under his provision and protection; We are *in Christ* as Paul says
Living our lives in a spiritual *bubble* if you will, in the *best* sense of the phrase

➤ And b/c of that, *b/c* we've been brought under the influence of Christ, we have put *on* Christ Paul says; We've taken on his *identity*, his *virtue*, his *righteousness*
It's like cloth that's dipped in dye, and comes out reflecting its color; Yet *another* use of the word *baptize* in the first century
When cloth is brought under the influence of dye, it comes out looking like the dye

Have you ever heard the expression, “The clothes make the man?”
I'm glad that isn't true or I'd be sunk
But in salvation, it's spot on; Where Jesus *himself* is the garment of our righteousness
Something Isaiah alluded to 700 years *before* Christ (**Is 61:10**)
I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God, for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness
Or in Paul's verbiage – *As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*.
Complete with his righteousness, virtue, and life*****

So v27 is an expression of our *salvation*, and our *identity*
Symbolized by baptism, but not talking about it
That's for other Scriptures; And something every single believer should do
To show outwardly, what has already taken place inwardly
That you're part of God's family, having been brought under Christ's influence and taken on his identity, by faith

➤ All of which, leads Paul to this earth-shaking statement, in v28

[28] *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 then he adds this by way of summary

[29] *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring* [full-fledged members of God's chosen people], *heirs according to promise*.
If you're saved, you're a recipient of God's blessing, according to the *covenant* he first made to Abraham; Ending where he began, in v7

➤ But before he does, he makes a statement in v28, that challenges us to this day
[28] *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.*

IOW . . .

In Christ, our distinctions don't matter (v28-29)

Before Christ, the Law was like a nanny; *With* Christ, we're part of God's family; And *in* Christ, our distinctions don't matter

Now, I don't mean that there's a *lack* of distinction among us; And neither does Paul
Rather, our distinctions shouldn't *matter*; Not when it comes to being a part of the body of Christ; Not when it comes to our fellowship
Not when it comes to our unity; And solidarity
Our distinctions shouldn't matter; And don't; Any of them

➤ B/c first of all, *there is neither Jew nor Greek* he says
As in, the distinction of ethnicity, doesn't matter in the church; Not to God
It's totally peripheral

Does that mean we cease to *be* red, brown, yellow, black, or white when we come to Christ? No; Nor does our *nationality* go away when we walk in these doors . . .
Any more than our personality; It doesn't; And shouldn't
And to think otherwise would be a denial of reality and a rejection of God's beauty; His glory in *creating* us this way

We don't cease to *look* different when we come to Christ; We don't cease to *have* cultural affinities; They just don't *matter* anymore

➤ And neither does our socio-economic status; The fact that *there is neither slave nor free* in Christ; The *extreme* of class distinctions; They too don't matter

Does this mean we should all *make* the same? Or *have* the same? Once again, no
God has gifted and blessed us differently, for different purposes and different ends
Some to make *more*, as models of generosity; And others to make *less*, as models of contentment

But either way, it doesn't matter; Not when it comes to worship; Not when it comes to partnership; Not when it comes to ministry
In Christ, our socio-economic status – does not, and should not matter

➤ And the same is true of our *gender* – that *there is no male and female* as Paul says it

Not that this is an argument for androgynous *people*; Or a gender-*neutral* church
Or that Paul's *roles* for men and women in the church can be ignored; They can't

And to say otherwise, as some people do on the basis of this verse, is one of the worst
examples of proof-texting in the history of Christendom
Where people take this out of context, and use it to support their notion that women can
be pastors, elders, or deacons
Rendering Paul's statements to the contrary, in 1 Tim 2-3, moot

It's a kind of blatant, interpretive license to make the Bible mean whatever you want
The end of which, is that *nothing* can be taken seriously, and *everything* is in question

➤ So Paul doesn't mean that our gender should be *ignored*, but that it shouldn't *divide*; It
shouldn't stigmatize; It shouldn't alienate; It shouldn't separate

In fact, our gender differences should be *appreciated*; Instead of thinking that a woman is
useless just b/c she's a woman, or a man is *arrogant* just b/c he's a man . . .
We should *appreciate* the giftedness and perspective our differences offer
And *never* allow them to divide us; Ever

And the same goes for our race, class, looks, and money
Like when we think less of those who *make* less; Or think less of those who *make more*;
Despising them just *b/c* they have money; It's wrong
B/c when it comes to God's people in God's family, our distinctions should never
prevent entrance, never prevent fellowship, and never prevent worship
In Christ, in relationship with him, under *his* rule and reign – they *do not matter*

➤ And yet, far too often they do, don't they? Especially when it comes to *race*
Far too often we harbor racial *biases*; Far too many carry ethnic *prejudices*
Oh, it might not be blatant, or visible, or audible; But it's there
Whether you're Hispanic and think less of Asians, or Asian and think less of Indians, or
Black and think less of whites, or White and think less of everybody
Far too often, for far too many, distinctions *do* matter

And instead of *identifying* such unbiblical attitudes, and *repenting* of them, and
repudiating them – we hang on to them
Holding them close to the vest and *continuing* in sin; Even if it's silent; It's still sin

➤ And I can hear the objections now; B/c I used to think them
“If the shoe fits, they deserve to wear it; I mean they dress weird, they look weird, and
they do weird things; And some of them live like animals; And do *bad* things”

True; People of different races look different, dress different, and act different sometimes;
And to them, so do you; Does that make *you* weird?

And true, some of them do *bad* things; Red, brown, yellow, black, *and* white
And if you *see* immoral behavior on their part, or *hear* of a criminal conviction; And
think – “Bad *person*; Evil *person*; Foolish *person*,” Fine
But if you look at them and think – “Bad *Black*; Evil *Asian*; Foolish *Hispanic*; White
trash – not fine; You've crossed the line; And you're *out* of line

➤ And even more so, if you think less of someone based solely on the color of their *skin*
Especially in the church (**Eph 2:13-16**); With other brothers and sisters in *Christ*

B/c *in Christ Jesus* you who once were far off have been brought *near* by the blood of
Christ. [14] For he *himself* is our peace, who has made us both *one* [all one] and has
broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility [15] by abolishing the law of
commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one *new* man in
place of the two, so making peace, [16] and might reconcile us *both* to God in *one body*
through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Racial distinctions among us, especially in the church – do not, and should not, matter;
Ever; We're *all* made in God's image, and we're all *one******

- And to *overcome* such biases, you have to do 4 things; Constantly
1. You have to **identify** them, with an honest assessment of your soul
If you chafe at these things, you probably have a racial bias
If you jump to objections right away, you probably carry a prejudice
 2. You have to **repent** of them, with a broken disposition of your heart
With godly sorrow, b/c first and foremost, you've sinned against *him*
 3. You have to **repudiate** such biases; Reject them, Renounce them
And you need to do so both privately *and* publically
So let me start by saying I've been *wrong* in my thinking on this
It's been years; Even decades; But I've been wrong
 4. You have to **counter** them, every chance you get
Reaching out to those you're leery of; Engaging those you're skeptical of; And
speaking *up* to defend what's right

If we're going to bear fruit in keeping with repentance, if we're going to render our
racial distinctions more and more moot . . .
We *have* to be biblical, and we *have* to be intentional (**Summary**)

B/c in God's eyes, we are *one*; We are all *one* in *Christ Jesus* (28b)
Which means that our diversity, is less important than our unity

Prayer – God, would you help us in this? Every day; Would you convict even now, and
find repentance; Would you give us humility, to repudiate our wrongs? And courage, to
reach out? We want to live the way *you* see us; United; Likeminded; *One* in Christ
Receive our tithes and offerings now for that very purpose; That we might reflect the
glory of your family, more and more