

Review

What a great weekend. We had 50 couples join us for the marriage conference, and it was such a rich time in the Lord. When God strengthens marriages in our house our whole church family is strengthened.

Today we're picking up in Part 4 of our Galatians series. This group of churches in Central Turkey [Slide 2 – Map] was precious to Paul because they were some of the first churches that he and Barnabas planted. The churches were on dangerous ground, moving away from Christ into a message that was teaching them that their spiritual standing with God was based on their own works. Addressing this error is one of the main subjects of this letter.

In chapter 2, Paul, while recounting the story of what happened at Antioch, shared how some key leaders were carried into hypocrisy. Their actions were inconsistent with their own convictions about the truth of the gospel, and he confronted it.

- The Jewish believers in Antioch had begun to elevate their common racial identity above the experience of being a new creation in Christ. Even Barnabas and Peter had gotten caught up in it.
- This led to the church temporarily dividing into subgroups in Antioch because they were identifying more with their racial background than with their identity in Christ, the new creation.
 - Not only did this disrupt the unity of the church, but it led them into thinking the cross was not enough. Faith in Jesus wasn't enough. They needed to add their own works to what Jesus had done in order to be saved.
 - They were embracing a distorted gospel of salvation by works, believing that salvation is by good works rather than faith in Christ. The reality is that we're not saved by good works, but for good works.
 - The Works "Gospel" – is all about being impressed with ourselves and trying to impress others with our performance.
 - **In the works mindset you become addicted to people's opinions, more afraid of what they think than you are with pleasing the Lord.**

The true Grace Gospel has completely different thinking. It's all about Jesus. You are so impressed with Jesus, and with what He has accomplished on the cross and that you joyfully surrender to and follow Him.

The reason Paul is recounting what happened in Antioch a few years earlier was that the Galatian believers were facing the same thing a few years later. (Aren't you thankful for spiritual fathers that impart wisdom to our lives so that we don't have to repeat the mistakes of previous generations?)

In chapter 3 it says

3:1 Oh foolish Galatians! Who has cast an evil spell on you? For the meaning of Jesus Christ's death was made as clear to you as if you had seen a picture of his death on the cross.

3:3 - How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?

The apostle was calling them back to the grace gospel, and back to the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ.

At the end of chapter 3, we come a portion of scripture that we're going to zoom in on today.

Gal 3:26-28 - Read

²⁶ For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ 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.

1. You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

On the day you were born, you were given a birth certificate that records where you were born, who your parents are, your name, your height and weight. That certificate determines your citizenship in most countries.

I'd like to also let you know that when you were born again, born from above, the Lord recorded it. Psalm 87 talks about this.

Psalm 87:

And of Zion it will be said,

"This *one* and that *one* were born in her;

And the Most High Himself shall establish her."

⁶ The LORD will record,

When He registers the peoples:

"This *one* was born there."

When you were born again, this verse says WHERE you were born – you were born in ZION. That’s a heavenly address, the realm of God’s kingdom, and it supersedes any nation on earth. Listen, I love my country and I’m forever grateful for the United States. If you are from another country, it’s good that you love your country. But that being written on my birth certificate isn’t nearly as important as that fact that it was recorded that I was BORN AGAIN.

When you were born again, your birth recorded was recorded.

This one was born in Zion.

Parents – Abba, Father.

Name - They’ve been called by a new name.

Race: New Creation

Your new birth provided you with new citizenship. Philippians 3:20 puts it this way – our citizenship is in heaven!

[Passport slide]

There’s something special about coming back into the US, and going through the customs. I love it when the border agents say, “welcome home sir”. My citizenship, represented by my passport, gives me access into the US and wonderful freedom.

Your heavenly citizenship affords you amazing kingdom access. As a supernatural-born citizen of God’s kingdom you have unsurpassed freedom.

I’ll never forget travelling back from Rome one time, and Rachel and I were clearing customs and Washington Dulles. There was a large group of students that had been on a trip to Rome as well, and they were in line with us. A US customs agent that was clearly from another country based on their thick accent approached a High School aged student in line next to us of Asian decent, and in began to really lay into him about being in the wrong line. He was in the US citizen line with us and she thought he belonged in visitor line.

He just held up his passport and said “Ma’am I’m from the US” in a clearly American accent with a bit of southern twang. The border agent kind of sheepishly walked away without apologizing to continue her work, and let’s be nice this morning and just chalk that up to her having a off day.

I felt bad for that young man, but I was also very impressed how he stood his ground. He was saying, “I belong here”. “This is my home”.

Your identity in Christ, your new birth, and your kingdom citizenship are going to be tested. You will – we all will - face some kind of a rogue agent that questions

whether you belong. Stand your ground. The ground you stand on has nothing to do with your past. The ground you stand on is the Lord Jesus Christ, not your own works or your own righteousness.

Earlier this year in our series on *Identity* we saw that in Matthew 3, the Father spoke over Jesus, “this is my beloved son who brings me great joy.” This was before Jesus had even performed a single miracle or begun his public ministry. It was a joy based on connection and relationship not function and performance.

It’s the same with us – you are a beloved son or beloved daughter of the Lord that brings Him great joy. It’s from the overflow of life from this connection that we function in our God-given assignments.

What happened in Matthew 4 is very significant though. Just a couple of verses after the Father says “you are my beloved son”, Satan says “if you are the son of God”, questioning his identity and trying to get him to prove it on his own, separate from his connection with the Father. Jesus answers him with the same weapon and resource made available to us – “It is Written”.

What’s written in Galatians? “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” Say it with me. “I’m accepted. I belong. I’m a daughter of freedom, I’m a son of freedom.”

2. Christ is now your primary identity.

- A. **Neither Jew nor Greek** - This isn’t saying that your nationality or ethnos doesn’t matter. Did you know that the scripture says that every tribe, tongue and nation are gathered around the throne in heaven? That means that even heaven celebrates your ethnicity. However, your ethnicity is **NO LONGER THE PRIMARY THING THAT DEFINES YOUR LIFE**, and it is not the basis of our relationship with each other in the body of Christ. There is a **NEW RACE** called the **NEW CREATION** and everyone in it is **ONE FAMILY**. This is not to say “I’m color blind man, I don’t see color.” My friend, Sam Huddlesten had this to say about these types of statements: “Are you saying that you can’t see that I’m black? God loves diversity, he made diversity. The Kingdom doesn’t ignore it. It transcends it and therefore unites us. The Kingdom goes beyond the limits of our differences...and so must we! When I truly see you, I can appreciate, honor, and love the way God has made you, but I can also see that you are clothed with Christ.
- B. **Neither slave nor free** – This is saying that our socio-economic status has nothing to do with our standing in Christ. That’s not to say that God

doesn't care about our day to day, going-to-work lives and needs, but it's saying that there are no social classes in the Kingdom of God.

- C. **Neither male nor female** – Clearly still have men and women in the church, and we value and celebrate the different gifts that each bring. But neither our maleness nor femaleness qualifies us more or less – it's all about Jesus.

These terms all relate to Ethnicity, Economic status, gender...those things can not and do not divide us. WE are one in Him. Though all of these distinctions are exist, when you are in Christ, none of them are your primary identity any longer.

None of them are an adjective that you can put before the word Christian, or son, or New Creation.

None of these distinctions qualify for you a greater status in God's kingdom, because nothing can qualify you anymore than the cross of Jesus has already qualified you.

You really can't add any other adjectives before word Christian. One doesn't say "female Christian" or "male Christian" or "married" or "single" or "super Christian" or "lame Christian" or "rich" Christian or "poor" Christian. You don't say "Jewish Christian" or "Gentile Christian" or white or black or Asian or Hispanic or Indian Christian.

There's only one kind of Christian - one that goes through the cross, and comes out as a new creation. You just are one or you aren't one.

Sometimes it may be that someone is trying to enhance their standing with God (or in front of others). But it may be that they are minimizing their standing with God.

That means we don't add issues, preferences, sins, or any other pretext in front of the word Christian. It's not a word that we qualify with other words. There are no disclaimers that belong in front of it, and there are no enhancers that belong behind it. It's a word that stands alone.

It's extremely problematic when people take their past or current struggles and their brokenness and embrace those things as an identity. Sometimes those words get attached to the word "Christian" whether they say it before or after.

- Christian addict.
- Christian fill in the blank
- Christian sinner of any kind.

What that's saying is that they identify as believers, but their identity is in their brokenness instead of Jesus. We need to reject that kind of thinking. To think this way and talk this way is to reduce grace to something that it's not.

I'm not saying that there's not a process to grow in character.

I'm not saying that believers don't struggle in that growth process.

We start with faith in Christ and His finished work and work out our salvation from there.

What's we're saying is what II Corinthians 5:17 says, ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Galatians 6:15

¹⁵ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

I'm not trying to get caught up in semantics. I know that when you say someone is a Syrian believer or a Russian believer or a Chinese believer or a Mexican believer or American believer or Navajo believer, what you're trying to tell me that they are a Christian from one of those places. That's fine. You don't have to stop saying that.

What God's word is addressing is a mindset that prioritizes earthly descriptors and identifiers above heavenly ones. When we have a mindset that puts another qualifier in front of Christ, then we are basing our spiritual standing, at least in part, on who we are, instead of who He is. And that's part of why we've called this series ALL ABOUT JESUS. Your salvation, your spiritual standing with God is not based on who you are. It's based on who Jesus is, and what He's done. It's based on the free gift of His grace.

We see our true identity highlighted throughout Galatians

D. Crucified with Christ.

E. You are all One in Christ - We are one with Christ and with each other.
(Lord's Table)

F. A New Creation in Christ

G. Sons of God through faith Christ.

What do they all have in common? The Lord Jesus Christ!

3. You are no longer a slave. You are free!

4

⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

The Spirit of His Son is the Holy Spirit. He comes in our hearts when we place our faith and trust in Jesus to bring us into the same connection with God that Jesus has. That’s why we can cry out “Abba Father, Daddy God”

You are no longer a slave to performance. You are no longer a slave to trying to work for right standing with God.

You are no longer a slave to fear.

You are no longer a slave to sin.

Rather, you are son, and if a son, then an HEIR.

H. Holy Spirit – Abba Father.

I. You are no longer a slave, but a SON and HEIR. As an heir, you are inheriting all of the promises of God in Jesus Christ.

Communion