

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 6-29-14 AM NOTES
"THE BLESSINGS OF BEING A DESCENDENT OF ABRAHAM"
GALATIANS 3:26-29
#9 in Series, "Galatians: Living With Roots"

Acts 14:2-6 (NKJV) "2 But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. 3 Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. 4 But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. 5 And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, 6 they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region."

Acts 14:11-13 (NKJV) "11 Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!' 12 And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. 13 Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes."

Acts 14:14-18 (NKJV) "14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out 15 and saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, 16 who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' 18 And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them."

Acts 14:19-20 (NKJV) "19 Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. 20 However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe."

Acts 14:21-23 (NKJV) "21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.' 23 So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed."

Genesis 15:6 (HCSB) "Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness."

Galatians 3:24 (NKJV) "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith."

Genesis 22:18a (NKJV) "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed..."

I. The Blessing of Being a Son of God (v. 26)

"The notion that we are children of God, His own sons and daughters...is the mainspring of Christian living...Our sonship to God is the apex of creation and the goal of redemption."
—Sinclair Ferguson

Acts 17:29a (NKJV) "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God..."

Hebrews 12:6 (ESV) "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives."

II. The Blessing of Being Baptized Into Christ (v. 27)

1 Corinthians 12:13a (NKJV) “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...”

*When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found;
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne.*

—Edward Mote (1832)

III. The Blessing of Being One in Christ (v. 28)

A. Ethnic or Racial Barriers Are Broken Down (v. 28a)

B. Class Barriers Are Broken Down (v. 28b)

“Circumstances of birth, wealth, privilege and education have divided men and women from one another. But in Christ snobbery is prohibited and class distinctions are rendered void.”
—John Stott

C. Gender Barriers Are Broken Down (v. 28c)

“But the Lord Jesus emancipated and ennobled womanhood. He was born of a woman. Women often ministered to His material needs during His earthly ministry. No woman ever hurt Him. He cast evil spirits out of Mary Magdalene, forgave the woman taken in adultery, blessed the woman who washed His feet with her tears, and honored Mary of Bethany for her magnificent faith. Women lingered to the last at the cross. They were first at the tomb. The glorious news, ‘He is risen!’ was first proclaimed to a woman, and it was a woman who first carried the tidings to others.”

— John Phillips

IV. The Blessing of Being Heirs According to the Promise (v. 29)

Revelation 21:3-4, 7 (NKJV) “³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’... ⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”

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At the risk of boring those who have been here through this foundational series on the book of Galatians, I want to spend some time giving the background for the book and summarizing what we have learned in the first three chapters of the book. On his first missionary journey, the Apostle Paul planted several churches in the province of Galatia. You can read about his journey in Acts 13-14. The accounts from these two chapters are more exciting than a fiction novel, but they are accurate historical accounts. Some examples of what I am talking about would be the events in Iconium (a city in Galatia) in **Acts 14:2-6 (NKJV)** “² But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. ³ Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. ⁴ But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the apostles. ⁵ And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, ⁶ they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region.” Paul and Barnabas then went to Lystra (in Galatia). In Lystra, God healed a crippled man and the people responded in a way that must have surprised Paul. **Acts 14:11-13 (NKJV)** “¹¹ Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian *language*, ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!’ ¹² And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes.” That caused a strong reaction from Paul and Barnabas. With great vigor Paul and Barnabas responded in **Acts 14:14-18 (NKJV)** “¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out ¹⁵ and saying, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, ¹⁶ who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷ Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.’ ¹⁸ And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them.” But then some of the Jews who hated Paul and his message of grace came and stirred up the people of Lystra against them. The same people who wanted to worship them as gods had quite a different reaction in **Acts 14:19-20 (NKJV)** “¹⁹ Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul *and* dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead. ²⁰ However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.” What did Paul do in Derbe (a city in Galatia)? He shared the Gospel and planted churches. **Acts 14:21-23 (NKJV)** “²¹ And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’ ²³ So when **they had appointed elders in every church**, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” These were some of the churches in the area of Galatia that Paul is addressing the letter of Galatians to. The members of the churches of Galatia were primarily Gentiles. Here is what happened. Some Jews, probably from Jerusalem, came to the churches saying, “Paul has misled you. He isn’t a real Apostle. He even persecuted the church.” These Jews who have been called Judaizers made a profession of belief in Jesus, but they refused to abandon the ceremonial law. Their message went something like this: “It is true that to be a disciple of Christ you must believe in Him as did Abraham, but after Abraham, God gave the law to Moses and so added to faith you must keep the law – circumcision, the dietary laws, the feast days, the sacrifices – in short, you must join with Judaism to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.” The Galatians were listening to this teaching that salvation is a combination of faith and the work of keeping

the law. They were considering leaving the freedom of the Gospel of grace and going into the bondage of legalism because they were not adequately rooted in the Gospel of grace (even though it had clearly been taught by the Apostle Paul).

Last week we saw that when it comes to our Gospel roots, we go back to Abraham, not to Moses over 400 years after Abraham. Abraham was saved by faith – not by works or a mixture of faith and works. **Genesis 15:6 (HCSB)** says “Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness.” The law given to Moses some 400 plus years later was never intended to be a new way or an additional way to be saved. The law was added for our benefit to show us our sin and our need for a Savior. We saw last week in **Galatians 3:24 (NKJV)** “Therefore the law was our tutor *to bring us* to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” After we have come to Christ, the law has done its work. The moral law – the commandments repeated in the New Testament still serve to show us what pleases God, but the law is not now nor was it ever to be the means of our salvation. It is only by the enabling of the indwelling Holy Spirit that we can obey the moral commands of God with the right motive.

In today’s text, Paul is showing us that even Gentiles who have come to Christ by grace alone through faith alone are descendants of Abraham. We are the spiritual seed of Abraham. How are Gentiles today a descendent of Abraham? Here is a summary of that answer and then we will look at it more in depth in the message. The Abrahamic covenant that we looked at last week was given to Abraham and his seed (**Genesis 22:18 (NKJV)** “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed...”). Paul tells us that this “seed” or descendent is singular and that it refers to Christ. Paul has gone to great lengths to show us that when we respond to the Gospel in faith, we are baptized into union with Christ (Galatians 2:20) and in Christ, we are the spiritual seed of Abraham and the promise that God made to Abraham is to those in Christ. Confused? Stay with me as we look at these very important verses in Galatians 3:26-29 and focus on the blessings of being a descendent of Abraham.

I. The Blessing of Being a Son of God (V26)

Sinclair Ferguson said, “The notion that we are children of God, His own sons and daughters ... is the mainspring of Christian living ... Our sonship to God is the apex of creation and the goal of redemption” [Quoted in Tim Keller, *Galatians for You*, page 89]. Verse 26 may very well be one of the most misquoted verses in the whole Bible. While God is the **creator** of all mankind, He is not the **Father** of all mankind. Most people who misquote this verse leave off the last part of the verse. The “all” is defined later in the verse as being those who through faith are **in Christ Jesus**. It is not speaking of all humanity. The cry of the modernists in the last century was, “The universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man”. There is a sense that all mankind are God’s offspring because all human beings have been made in His image. Paul at Mars Hill in Athens said in **Acts 17:29a (NKJV)** “Therefore, since we are the offspring of God ...” What Galatians 3:26 is speaking of is a much deeper relationship than just being created by God. Those in Christ are His sons.

Some people take offense that the masculine “son” is used here and not “children” or “sons and daughters”. Some of the newer translations that are called “gender inclusive” (such as the 2011 revision of the NIV) replace “sons” with “children of God”. That is a shame because the original language says “sons”. When we change it to “children” we change the meaning. Here is what Paul is saying (and it was really radical in the first century). In most ancient cultures daughters could not inherit property. “Son” in that culture meant legal heir which was a status not available to women. When he calls us all sons of God, he is saying that we all (male and female) are equally heirs of God. Let me give you another example of including both men and women in a category that is typically used of one sex. Both men and women in the church are called the bride of Christ in Revelation 21:2. Men are a part of the Son’s bride and women are sons who are heirs. When you change “sons” to “children” you miss a glorious, radical truth.

Notice that this designation “sons of God” is not something that we will attain to one day in the future; it is true right now. To be the sons of God is the heart of the Christian life. There is nothing greater or more encouraging. When we are God’s sons through faith in Christ, we no longer personally see God as **our** judge, but **our** Father. As a perfect Father, He disciplines us when it is warranted by our

disobedience, but it is a discipline that flows out of His love for us as His sons. **Hebrews 12:6 (ESV)** “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.”

Paul is saying, “In Christ, you are the seed of Abraham and a son of God – legal heir. That is who you are **right now**. Why would you want to put yourself back under the law?”

II. The Blessing of Being Baptized into Christ (V27)

There are two pictures in the New Testament that illustrate our union with Christ. The first picture is water baptism. When you see the word “baptize” or “baptism” in Scripture, you have to look carefully at the context to discern if it is referring to the Holy Spirit baptizing us into Christ or if it is water baptism. The word “baptized” here in verse 27 is speaking of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not some second blessing given to selective Christians who reach a level of faith and commitment to attain it. The word “baptize” means to immerse or to put into. At the moment of our salvation, the Holy Spirit puts us “in Christ” – not selective Christians, but all Christians. **1 Corinthians 12:13a (NKJV)** “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free...” Paul cannot be saying that the act of baptism in water saves us because that would contradict the whole theme of Galatians – salvation is through faith alone, not faith plus circumcision or any other work. If he was saying that baptism in water saves us, he would be substituting one external rite or act (baptism) for another external act (circumcision). Water baptism is our public profession that we are indeed in union with Christ. Every part of the ordinance of baptism presents that picture of our identity with Christ. It is an external expression of an internal reality. When a believer is immersed in the water, he is testifying that when Christ died, I died in Him. The believer is put out of sight in the water signifying that when Christ’s body was put in the tomb, it was out of sight. Thus the believer is saying that he or she is identified with Christ in His death and in His burial. Just as Christ was not left in the tomb, the believer is not left in the watery grave. Just as Jesus rose, the believer is raised with Him to walk in a newness of life. Here is the point: we are in Christ and in Christ we become a partaker of His life. What happened to Jesus has now happened to us. We are in Christ! He is the seed of Abraham so we are descendants of Abraham in Christ.

The second picture Paul uses to illustrate our union with Christ is the putting on of clothes. That phrase in the NKJV “put on Christ” is more accurately translated in the NASB, “have clothed yourselves with Christ” (Romans 13:12; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:12). Being clothed with Christ pictures the fact that we are covered with Christ. Instead of trying to clothe ourselves with the righteousness of the law, we have “put on Christ”. When God looks at us, we are in Christ, covered by Christ and His merit satisfies the Father. In an old hymn it is put this way:

When He shall come with trumpet sound,

Oh, may I then in Him be found;

Dressed in His righteousness alone,

Faultless to stand before the throne.

- Edward Mote (1832)

Oh the glorious truth of our union with Christ. We are immersed into Christ. What Jesus has done, is now considered by God to be true of us. The crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ is counted true of us because we are “in Him”. His righteousness is ours and His thus His acceptance by the Father is ours. Because Christ is the seed of Abraham, we are Abraham’s seed because we are in Christ. Oh glorious, incomprehensible truth. This Christ is so much more than a part of our life; He is our life! Perhaps the simplest definition of a Christian is “one who is in Christ”.

III. The Blessing of Being One in Christ (V28)

In verse 26 Paul reveals the intimacy that exists between Christians and God the Father. In verse 27 we are informed of the intimate union between Christians and God the Son, Jesus Christ. Flowing out of verses 26 and 27, we see in verse 28 the closeness and unity between all who are in Christ. In the first century (as in the 21st century) society had drawn some distinct lines and set up some high walls of

separation between people. For those in Christ, the lines have been erased and the walls have been torn down! There are three barriers that are broken down. Before we look at these, let me give a word of caution. Paul is not saying that Christ has abolished all distinctions. He is saying that the distinctions do not matter when it comes to equal worth and value.

A. Ethnic or Race Barriers Are Broken Down (V28a)

In reality there is only one race, the human race, but I am using the word as it is often used today. Racial or ethnic barriers have no place in the church of Jesus Christ. In the church there is no hierarchy and no separation between Jew and Gentile, African and European and Asian, or any other racial, ethnic barriers that our culture puts up. People of one culture do not need to become like other cultures and abandon their distinctives to be accepted by God. Therefore we should accept one another with our cultural differences and tolerate no manifestations of superiority of one over the other. We are one in Christ Jesus, equal in our need for a Savior, equal in our total inability to earn or deserve salvation, and equal in our desire to live for His glory and our desire to get the Gospel to every people group on the planet.

B. Class Barriers Are Broken Down (V28b)

Nearly every society in the history of the world has developed a class or cast system. John Stott said it well. "Circumstances of birth, wealth, privilege and education have divided men and women from one another. But in Christ snobbery is prohibited and class distinctions are rendered void." [John Stott, *The Message of Galatians*, Page 101].

C. Gender Barriers Are Broken Down (V28c)

This was probably the strongest barrier in the first century. Women were considered drastically inferior to men. In most cultures then and in many cultures today, women were no more than property. But the Lord Jesus elevated women to a place of equality with men in worth and value. He did not do away with distinctions in biblical roles, but tore down the ungodly barriers between the sexes. Women had a prominent role in Christ's life in His earthly walk. John Phillips gives a good summary. "But the Lord Jesus emancipated and ennobled womanhood. He was born of a woman. Women often ministered to His material needs during His earthly ministry. No woman ever hurt Him. He cast evil spirits out of Mary Magdalene, forgave the woman taken in adultery, blessed the woman who washed His feet with her tears, and honored Mary of Bethany for her magnificent faith. Women lingered to the last at the cross. They were first at the tomb. The glorious news, 'He is risen!' was first proclaimed to a woman, and it was a woman who first carried the tidings to others." [John Phillips, *Exploring Galatians*, page 113]. Men and women stand equal in worth and value in Christ.

Let me state again that being in Christ does not do away with distinctions in ethnic groups or between men and women (God is not a unisex advocate); Paul was speaking of spiritual differences, differences in standing before the Lord, spiritual value, privilege, and worth. [John MacArthur Commentary on Galatians, Page 100].

IV. The Blessing of Being Heirs According to the Promise (V29)

This verse sums up what it means to be in Christ. In Him we are the heir (we inherit) the spiritual promise of salvation and blessings promised to Abraham. The focus isn't Abraham for he was a sinner as we were. The focus is on Christ, the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. In reality, every blessing is ours because we are in Christ.

CONCLUSION

Because you are "in Christ", the promises to Abraham and his seed are yours. In Christ, you are a son of God; you are clothed in Christ righteous before a holy God. You are a part of the church and on equal ground with every other person who is in Christ. In Him you are an heir of spiritual promises to Abraham. Our ultimate inheritance is proclaimed in **Revelation 21:3-4, 7 (NKJV)** "³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.

⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor

crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away' ... ⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."