

A DEFENCE OF THE AUTHENTIC GOSPEL: A STUDY OF GALATIANS

(LESSON FIFTY-ONE)

“ABRAHAM’S OFFSPRING AND HEIR”

GALATIANS 3:27-29

(ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION)

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 no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

29 And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

In verse **27** of our text, Paul informs the Galatian believers of how they became united with Christ. He writes, *“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”* Paul is explaining to them that when they put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, the Holy Spirit baptized, or placed them into Christ, thus uniting them with Him and with each other.

It is clear from the context of the passage, as well as the overall context of **Galatians**, that the “baptism” of which Paul is speaking is not water baptism. He is referring to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. He is speaking of the introduction, or the placing of a believing sinner into the new environment of Jesus Christ and the Church, which is His mystical Body. In this sense, the Greek word **baptizó** means, “to be completely identified with.” It is this “baptism” that Paul refers to in **1 Corinthians**

12:13: *“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.”*

This union with Christ and His church radically and permanently alters the believer’s condition and relationship to his or her previous environment or condition. It is of this radical and permanent change that Paul speaks of in **Colossians 1:12-13**:

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.

Our Lord Himself addressed this matter in **John 5:24**. The **New Living Translation**, renders the verse as follows: *“I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.”*

In verse **27**, Paul says that those who have been baptized into Christ have “*put on*” Christ. The words “*put on*” are a translation of the Greek word **enduó**: (**en-doo’-o**), which means, “to clothe or be clothed with (in the sense of sinking into a garment).”

In the same way that a person who puts on a garment, envelops himself or herself in the garment, and is defined by it, so the person who is baptized into Christ by the Holy Spirit, is entirely immersed in Christ and in His salvation, and is thereafter forever defined by Christ and His salvation.

In verse **28**, Paul informs his readers that, by virtue of them being baptized or immersed into Christ and His Body, they have all been fully united with everyone else who is in Christ. He writes, *“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.”* There are no first and

second class citizens in the Body of Christ. Jews do not carry a higher rank than Gentiles. Free people hold no greater honour than slaves. Men are not superior to women. No race is a “master race,” nor is any ethnicity superior or inferior.

How is this possible? It is possible because Jesus Christ holds the most honoured position in the family of God, and all believers are equally “in Christ.” In that way, we are one, we are united and we are equal. There is no place in the Body of Christ for either racial, social, or gender prejudice.

Paul is saying, in effect to the Galatian believers, “All the **external** barriers that used to divide you have been broken down in Christ Jesus—all the ethnic barriers, all the social barriers, all the gender barriers, all the religious barriers. Now since they have been broken down, I want you to live out the reality of this in your churches. Break down the **internal** barriers that you have erected and love each other and have fellowship with each other.”

It is critical for us to understand that though we were drawn to Jesus Christ by the Father in a personal way, and though we experienced salvation individually, in the context of the church, we are not to operate individually. In the church we must operate corporately, for the church is a body—the Body of Christ. To be united to Jesus Christ, means that we are connected to the entire Body of Christ, whether we like it or not. If we are truly “*in Christ*,” then we are organically related to every other person who is “*in Christ!*” It is for this reason that no individual member of the body of Christ, can come to full maturity in Christ unless he or she is actively interacting with the other members of the body!

Being “in Christ” means that neither our ethnicity, our social status, nor our gender, is relevant to our redemptive identity. Of course, these outward distinctions do not change after we are saved: Gentiles do not become Jews, slaves do not become free, and women do not become men; but these distinctions no longer carry any significance whatsoever in God’s redemptive program. Every saved individual becomes

Abraham's spiritual offspring, and will be included in the fullness of God's redemptive promises. Every saved individual becomes an "heir," because they are in Christ Jesus according to faith in the promise, not according to the works of the law. This is what Paul argues in verse **29**. He writes, "*And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*"

Commenting on verse **29**, **Kenneth Wuest**, writes the following;

"The Judaizers taught that by becoming subjects of the Mosaic law, the Galatian Gentiles would become the seed or progeny (descendants) of Abraham. Paul asserts that this privilege comes to one **by faith in Christ**. In **Romans 4**, Paul shows that Abraham was justified by faith, and was thus constituted the spiritual father of all who put their faith in Christ, whether they are circumcised or uncircumcised. **God made salvation dependent upon faith in order that it might be available to both Jew and Gentile**. Since Abraham is the spiritual father of all believers, this does away with the false Jewish notion that kinship (being related) to Abraham brings one into the divine favor and gives one salvation. By belonging to Christ, believers are also Abraham's posterity (children), for Christ is the seed of Abraham. Since believers have entered into relationship with Christ, they must consequently have a share in the same state, and must likewise be Abraham's seed."

Brothers and sisters, if we have genuinely been saved, we belong to Jesus Christ and are heirs of God the Father, "*according to promise,*" for we received the promised Holy Spirit the moment we placed our faith in Him for salvation. Earlier, in verses **13** and **14**, Paul had written, "*Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*" The last clause of verse **14** makes it clear that the "*blessing of Abraham*" is related to the promise of the Holy Spirit, for unless one is

justified by faith, or declared righteous by God, he or she cannot receive “*the promised Spirit.*”

According to **Galatians 3:16**, Christ is the “*offspring,*” or seed of Abraham. Therefore, being “in Christ” makes the believer a spiritual descendant of Abraham and thus an heir of the promise to Abraham. In **Galatians 3:7-9**, Paul writes,

7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “In you shall all the nations be blessed.”

9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

To be Abraham’s offspring, or seed, means that believers inherit the promise made to Abraham in **Genesis 12:1-3**:

1 Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.

2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

It is important for us to understand that the promises mentioned in these verses apply not only to the Jews but to all those who are “in Christ.” In **Genesis 22:15-18**, we read the following:

15 And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven

16 and said, “By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,

17 I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,

18 and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.”

In verse **17**, the angel of the LORD, Who incidentally speaks not only **for** the LORD, but **as** the LORD, says to Abraham, “**Your offspring shall possess the gate of his** (singular) **enemies.**” The angel of the LORD, refers to **one** “offspring,” and, as we stated earlier, in **Galatians 3:16**, Paul identifies that **one** “offspring,” to be Christ! He writes, “*Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ.*”

It is “in Christ” and only in Him that these promises are extended to all believers, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. In **2 Corinthians 1:20**, Paul writes, “*For all the promises of God find their Yes in him (Christ). That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.*”

It is clear from the context of **Galatians 3**, that in verse **29**, Paul is stressing the **spiritual** aspects of God’s promise to Abraham. The **material** aspects of the promise, particularly those having to do with land, are not in view in this chapter. Paul is primarily concerned with the aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant that have to do with salvation-the aspects emphasized by Jeremiah in **Jeremiah 31:31-34**:

31 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,

32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

The promises outlined in these verses emphasize the spiritual rather than the material. God speaks of the forgiveness of iniquity, the “forgetting” of sin, a personal knowledge of, and relationship with, God and the implantation of a new heart that creates in believers a desire to obey Him. Ultimately those promises extend past death to guarantee us eternal life with God in heaven.

In **Romans** chapter 4, Paul argues that Abraham was justified by faith, and was thus constituted the spiritual father of all believers in Christ, whether circumcised or uncircumcised. The **New Living Translation** renders verses **1-17**, in the following manner:

1 Abraham was, humanly speaking, the founder of our Jewish nation. What did he discover about being made right with God?

2 If his good deeds had made him acceptable to God, he would have had something to boast about. But that was not God's way.

3 For the Scriptures tell us, "Abraham believed God, and God counted him as righteous because of his faith."

4 When people work, their wages are not a gift, but something they have earned.

5 But people are counted as righteous, not because of their work, but because of their faith in God who forgives sinners.

6 David also spoke of this when he described the happiness of those who are declared righteous without working for it:

7 “Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight.

8 Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of sin.”

9 Now, is this blessing only for the Jews, or is it also for uncircumcised Gentiles? Well, we have been saying that Abraham was counted as righteous by God because of his faith.

10 But how did this happen? Was he counted as righteous only after he was circumcised, or was it before he was circumcised? Clearly, God accepted Abraham before he was circumcised!

11 Circumcision was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be righteous—even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are counted as righteous because of their faith.

12 And Abraham is also the spiritual father of those who have been circumcised, but only if they have the same kind of faith Abraham had before he was circumcised.

13 Clearly, God’s promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants was based not on his obedience to God’s law, but on a right relationship with God that comes by faith.

14 If God's promise is only for those who obey the law, then faith is not necessary and the promise is pointless.

15 For the law always brings punishment on those who try to obey it. (The only way to avoid breaking the law is to have no law to break!)

16 So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe.

17 That is what the Scriptures mean when God told him, "I have made you the father of many nations." This happened because Abraham believed in the God who brings the dead back to life and who creates new things out of nothing.

In verse **11**, Paul informs us of the aspect of the promise in the Abrahamic Covenant that is uppermost in his mind: "*Circumcision was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and **declared him to be righteous**—even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not been circumcised. They are **counted as righteous because of their faith.***"

Clearly, Paul is emphasizing **justification by faith**, which is God's declaration that a believing sinner is not guilty for all of time and eternity, because he or she is counted to be righteous as a result of the imputation of Christ's perfect righteousness to him or her.

The purpose of God in making the inheritance of the promise dependent on faith was that the promise might be guaranteed to all the seed. In verse **16**, Paul writes, "*So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And **we are all certain to receive it**, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham's. For **Abraham is the father of all who believe.***"

Paul says that Abraham is, “*the father of all who believe.*” This spiritual fatherhood made null and void the Jewish notion of physical paternity. A physical relationship with Abraham is of no significance in the economy of salvation.

Every believer receives and partakes of the blessing of justification which is through faith. This is the universal blessing promised to Abraham, through his seed Christ, for the whole world. The spiritual promise of eternal salvation and blessing given to Abraham belongs to all those who belong to Christ. They are all heirs according to that promise, which is fulfilled in Christ. An heir is a person who by law is a member of a particular family. If you are an heir, you have a legal right to an inheritance. Since we are now members of God’s family, we have a right to all that God has promised to His children.

We will conclude our Lesson this evening with **Warren Wiersbe’s** comments:

“This section of *Galatians* is valuable to us as we read the Old Testament Scriptures. It shows us that the spiritual lessons of the Old Testament are not for the Jews only but have application to Christians today...In the Old Testament we have **Preparation** for Christ; in the *Gospels*, the **Presentation** of Christ; and in the *Acts* through Revelation, the **Appropriation** of Christ.

Your Christian life ought to take on new wonder and meaning as you realize all that you have in Christ, and all of this is by grace-not by Law! You are an adult son in God’s family, an heir of God. Are you drawing on your inheritance? This will be Paul’s theme in the next section.”

