

I. Introduction: What is your identity?

II. You are sons of God. v. 23-27

A. Before faith came, the Law constrained you. v. 23-24

1. Being under the Law was like being shut up in a prison. v. 23-24
2. The law was our tutor/guardian.
3. The Law exposes our sin, but it cannot save. Acts 15:10
4. The purpose of the Law is to lead us to Christ so we may be justified by faith.
5. Have you felt like a captive to the Law?

**B. A new era of salvation history has dawned with the coming of Christ. v. 23-24 3:3-5
John 1:17 Rom. 6:14 10:4-13**

1. The Law was meant to be temporary and limited. 2 Co. 1:20
2. In what sense has faith newly come and been revealed? 3:6 Gen. 15:6
3. What happened in salvation history has happened to you personally. Phil. 3:9
4. What happened decisively when we were converted continues to happen in our lives – our continued failure to keep the Law keeps driving us back to Christ.
5. Our freedom from the Law does not lead to lawless living. 5:14ff Rom. 6:1,14ff

C. Now you are all sons of God through faith in Christ. v. 25-26 4:1-7 Rom. 8:14-18

1. We are no longer children who need a tutor or guardian (the Law). v. 25
2. We enjoy status as grown up sons and heirs. Rom. 8:14-18
3. Our sonship is not by physical descent, nationality, circumcision or law keeping.
4. Under the Old Covenant Israel was God's son in a typical sense, but now Israelites can only be sons of God through faith. Ex. 4:11 Hos. 11:1 Mal. 1:6
5. We too become sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. John 1:12-13
6. God is not the universal father to unbelievers in this sense. Acts 17:28 Eph. 2:3

D. You are united with Christ. v. 27 John 17:22-23

1. Of what kind of baptism is Paul speaking? 1 Cor. 10:2 12:13 Col. 3:12 Titus 3:5
2. Water baptism symbolizes our spiritual union with Christ. Ro. 6:3-4 1 Co. 12:13
3. Only those who are united with Christ by faith are participants in what baptism symbolizes. Mt. 3:6-9
4. What is the relationship between circumcision and baptism?
 - a. Circumcision was an outward sign of membership in God's community which had both typical/national significance and spiritual significance. Col. 2:12
 - b. The external types and shadows of the Old Covenant have passed away with the coming of Christ.
 - c. If baptism simply replaces circumcision, why didn't Paul use this to answer the Judaizers who insisted that the Gentile believers be circumcised?
 - d. Baptism symbolizes the New Covenant blessing of union with Christ.
 - e. Just as the Judaizers falsely taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation, some falsely teach that water baptism saves. Acts 16:31 11:47
5. What does it mean to be clothed with Christ? Rom. 13:14 Eph. 4:24 Col. 3:10,12 Isa. 61:10 Ps. 132:9,16,18 Zech. 3:3-5 2 Chron. 6:41 Pr. 31:25

E. How does the reality of our new identity change our lives?

III. You are all one in Christ through faith. v. 28 Col. 3:11 1 Co. 12:13

- A. This is a radical departure from the Old Covenant which was designed to keep Abraham's physical descendants separate from the Gentiles.
- B. The categories which divide humanity no longer separate us.
 - 1. There are no distinction of race. Eph. 2:11-16 Col. 3:11 Rom. 1:16 15:8ff Acts 15:11 Rev. 5:9
 - 2. There is no distinction of rank. James 2:1-13 1 Co. 1:26-29
 - 3. There is no distinction of gender. 1 Pet. 3:7
- C. Paul is not saying that all gender and social roles have been abolished.
 - 1. Christian feminists use this text to claim that there are no longer any differences in the role of men and women in the home and in the church. Gen. 1:27
 - 2. Elsewhere Paul affirms male headship in the church and in the home. 1 Co. 11:2ff Eph. 5:22ff 1 Pet. 3:1-7 1 Tim. 2:9-15 3:1ff
 - 3. Paul also upholds social authority structures in other spheres. Rom. 13:1-7 1 Cor. 7:21-22 Eph. 6:5-9 Titus 2:9-10 1 Tim. 6:1-2 Philemon Heb. 13:17
 - 4. Because we affirm the inerrancy of Scripture, we know that the Bible does not contradict itself. 2 Tim. 3:16 Ps. 19:7ff
 - 5. Paul is not addressing function and role in the church and in the home, but our spiritual equality in Christ. 1 Pet. 3:7
 - 6. Differing roles do not imply inferiority. 1 Cor. 11:3 Mark 10:42-45 Eph. 6:8
- D. This truth impacts how we see ourselves and others. Ro. 15:7 Js. 2:1ff 1 Co. 12:23f

IV. You are Abraham's descendants (seed) and heirs. v. 29

- A. Under the Old Covenant Abraham's physical descendants (seed), the Israelites, were heirs of the typical external promises to Abraham. Rom. 9:3-5
- B. Under the New Covenant those who belong to Christ (by faith) are Abraham's true descendants (seed) and heirs. 3:7,9 Rom. 8:16-17 9:6
- C. Of what are we heirs? Rom. 4:13 1 Pet. 1:4 Heb. 11:10,13-16
- D. Those who remain in unbelief are not Abraham's children and heirs, regardless of their physical descent. Rom. 2:28-29 9:6-13 Mt. 21:41
- E. This has some important implications.
 - 1. There is nothing which God has promised to Abraham which will not be ours.
 - 2. Only those who have personally believed should receive the signs of baptism and communion given for Abraham's seed under the New Covenant.

V. Conclusion.

Discussion questions

1. What is the purpose of the Law?
2. How does one become a son of God?
3. What is the meaning of baptism?
4. How does this passage impact our view of who should be baptized?
5. Is it a ever a good idea to separate Christians into groups by age and nationality?
6. How would you answer someone who claims that verse 28 teaches that women should be leaders in the church?
7. Is there any sense in which unbelieving Jews are still Abraham's sons and heirs?
8. Of what are we heirs?