

Our Spiritual Family
Study #10 Galatians 3:26-29
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It's **not easy to accept changes in things we're used to.**

Even the **most rebellious** have **some things** they **want to keep the same.**

When you find a **product you really like**, the manufacturer **changes it** so their marketing people can promote it as "**new and improved**".

We have to adjust to changes in the **TV schedule**,
seasonal trades in the **roster** of our favorite teams,
and finding new **places to shop and eat** when the old ones close down.

One of the **hardest changes** we face is in the **makeup of our own family.**

Marriage, babies, and adoptions are wonderful **blessings** - but there are **adjustments.**

By **adding someone new** to the home, **schedules** change, **responsibilities** are redistributed,
and hopefully there's **more to be thankful for** and **more there is to share.**

It's often a **hard adjustment for children** already in the home when a **new baby's** born.

It's **good** when they **learn to appreciate and love** the new brother or sister.

But it means **family schedules** are going to be different,
and this **new person** gets **so much attention** in the home.

If things are **handled right** the newcomer is **welcomed** by parents, and brothers or sisters.
and there's a deeper **appreciation** for God's wonders.

In the **First Century - a lot was changing** for those in the **family of God.**

The **boundaries of the spiritual family** were **re-defined.**

Gentiles were being **converted in large numbers** and **joining** with the **Christian synagogues.**

New congregations were springing up **in regions** that had been totally **pagan** up to that time.

These new Gentile brothers and sisters were **different.**

They had a different **background**, didn't know the **Hebrew Scriptures**, and **dressed** differently.

The new congregations **didn't celebrate** the **ancient holidays** of Israel.

Their leaders had often **never been to the Temple** in Jerusalem.

There were **challenges** and **adjustments** that had to be made.

Of course **Israel wasn't as pure as many of them thought** they were either.

Things had become **part of their way of life** that didn't come from God's word.

They were **dreamed up** by **irresponsible scholars**, but had become **familiar traditions.**

Yet the **hardest thing** was accepting a **change** in the **things God had given them** long ago.

The **ritual laws** that represented Christ **didn't apply any more** since the Messiah had come.

The Levitical Laws still taught **good lessons**, but were **no longer required.**

Israel had been expanded into the church of the long wait for Messiah.

The laws that **represented** Christ's work were **fulfilled** at the **Cross.**

The **result** is **what we have today**, but it seemed **revolutionary** in the **first century AD.**

Believers grew up with the **Temple worship**, animal and grain **sacrifices**,

a whole **calendar** of holy days, and **special Sabbaths** beyond just the seventh day Creation Sabbath.

The **Messiah** had been **only a promise, a hope** of what God would accomplish.

They'd been raised to think of the **physical descendants of Jacob** as their **spiritual family.**

With the coming of **Jesus Christ -- it all changed.**

There **were some** who wanted to **hang on** to the old ways, the old family traditions.

Paul's letter to the **Galatians** was written **partly to correct the *Judaizers.***

They said the new **Gentile converts** had to be **adopted into Israel**,

and undergo the old, but now fulfilled, **Levitical rituals.**

That was a **denial** of the finished **work of Jesus**, the Messiah to whom the rituals pointed.

This letter was written to **help the Galatians adjust to the changes.**

They needed to **appreciate** and **love** their *new family members*.
And they needed to **understand** the *new relationship* they had with God.

In Christ, they had a **more complete revelation** of God's plan.

It was a **less symbol-based way of living**. **They had what the symbols represented**,
and they had **what the prophets** of old only **hoped** for.

We enjoy being part of that **greater spiritual family** too.

That's what this next section of Paul's letter to the **Galatians** chapter **3** is about.

We have a **new and special unity** as the *family of Christ*.

Verses **25-28** of **Galatians 3** tells us about this **important privilege** we have by God's grace.

25 **But now that faith has come**, we are no longer under a guardian,

26 **for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God**, through faith.

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.

All true believers in Christ are part of **just one unified spiritual family**.

Paul tells us here that **we're all "sons of God"**.

He **doesn't mean** that in a **gender specific** way.

The word for "son" here is "huios" (υἱός) which is often a common word for "*child*".

The "*sons*" here **include both men and women** in the family of God.

All believers are **adopted** as God's special children **by grace through faith** in Jesus Christ.

There are always **some** who **claim to be members** of God's family - even though **they're not**.

They **say** they're "*Christians*", but might **not put their faith in Christ alone** to be made **right with God**.

They **think they need to add something else** to what he accomplished.

It might be their own imagined **good works**, the approval of some **church authority**,
or **rituals** they think actually remove their guilt.

They might even **use some words of Jesus**, but they **don't really understand or accept all the words** he spoke.

They **pick out what supports** what they **already believe**, and end up promoting a **false Christ**.

But those **who really believe** and are **baptized** into Christ **have also "put on Christ"**.

Being **baptized into Christ** isn't a simple reference to the Sacrament of **Baptism with water**.

It's a covenantal sign that those **baptized** are considered part of God's covenant community.

It does **not mean all baptized are redeemed** by the blood of Christ.

The **outward sign** of Baptism is **only a blessing to those truly united with him by grace**.

It **doesn't redeem** a person, or **wash away sins** by the **outward applying of water**.

Just as the Bible says **Israel was "baptized into Moses"**, so we're "**baptized into Christ**".

Many Jews were circumcized but were not redeemed believers. It's the same with those baptized today.

We're **sealed to him by faith**, by **trusting in what he was and taught us**.

You **don't just take up his name**, or start **quoting him** and start following his **moral teachings**.

It means **more** than just those things.

It means you **trust his claim to be God in human flesh**,

that he came to die in his people's place to **pay in full the debt** their **sins** have earned them.

But **if we're truly united with him by faith**, **we also put him on** as our **clothing**.

We come to God **dressed in his righteousness**, not in our own claims or good deeds.

We come **humbly**, **trusting in the work of our Savior** as our **substitute**.

This means true believers **have new life**, and are **striving to be like him**.

It's **not** a promise to **just the Jews**, but **to as many as are united with him** this way.

It's for the **Gentiles** too, for **Gentiles** as well as Jews, for **slaves** as well as those who are free.

It's for **women** as well as men.

Only men received the **sign of the covenant** under the **old administration** of God's Covenant.

In their **circumcision**, males **represented** their **whole household**.

Now Jesus Christ represents us all, so the Covenant sign of **Baptism**

is placed **on all in the household** brought to the **Savior** by grace through faith.

All true believers, **regardless** of race, status, or gender, are **united in Christ**. They're **all one** in him.

This verse has been used irresponsibly -- as if *all distinctions* were eliminated.

Christ **doesn't erase the created distinctives** in God's creation.

That's **not Paul's point** here. That's not the **context**.

There are **different duties** in the **spiritual family**, just as there are in our **earthly families**.

The **same apostle** wrote to the Colossians and to the Ephesians

that **husbands** are to be **responsible and loving leaders** in their homes,
and **wives** are to **respect that responsibility** given to the husbands.

This **doesn't mean** wives are of lesser importance in God's Kingdom.

It **doesn't give** husbands the right to mistreat or show disrespect to their wives.

It teaches husbands to **lead the home as Christ leads his church,**
sacrificially, giving of himself for the **spiritual benefit of his bride**.

Paul **also** clearly teaches the **leadership of men in the church**.

Those who **misapply** this verse to **justify women Elders or Pastors,**
have to **reject the teachings** of this **same apostle** in his letters to Timothy and to Titus.

The lesson here is that we are **all equal in Christ as redeemed children of God**.

No one in the church, leaders or congregation, men or women, adults or children, rich or poor,
is of a **lower standing** or of lesser importance as **God's beloved redeemed children**.

Those **brought to Christ from pagan backgrounds** are sinners saved by grace

just as those raised in Christian homes. There's **no distinction** in **God's Kingdom**.

Both have a **story to tell** about the **work of God's grace** in their lives.

Then Paul comes to the really encouraging part: If you are Christ's, you are Abraham's seed

Galatians 3:29, "**And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.**"

This was **shocking** to the Jews in the age of the Apostles.

Up to then, God used **physical Israel** to represent his church on earth.

They **were his people** then, but **now** he includes **believers from all nationalities**.

We need to **remember God's promise to Abraham** to understand **Paul's encouragement** here.

It **wasn't** a **Covenant just to Abraham** or even **just to his descendants**.

Genesis 12:3 says, "**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."

In the great **covenant chapter** of **Genesis 17**, **God clarified his promise** to Abraham.

17:7, "**And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you**

throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."

But the *descendants* of Abraham aren't just his *physical* children.

They include **all who God redeems by grace**, those in whom God implants a **redeeming faith**.

Right here, in the last verse of Galatians 3, Paul assures us that

we are also heirs of that promise to Abraham -- if we **belong to Christ**

-- Jew or Gentile, Slave or Free, Male or Female.

That means you and me too.

If we come to Christ - trusting in him alone, confessing nothing good in ourselves -

we **discover** that the **greatest good of all** has been **given to us by grace**.

The **Creator** of everything is **our God**, and we are **his family**, his much loved children.

That's the promise of his **Covenant**.

Everyone who **truly rests in Christ's victory** over sin alone for making him right with God

is our **brother**, our **sister**, in the **Spiritual Clan of the Church**.

Some won't **dress or talk** the way you do.

Some like different **music**, different **sports**, **pastimes** and **movies**.

Some **haven't had much of a background** in biblical teachings.

We shouldn't **divide** into **groups**

of those who wear dress shoes, sandals, or sneakers, or who wear suits or jeans,
or those who wear suits and sneakers at the same time.

All are **united with us in Christ** and need to be **loved** in the family of God.

We need to **learn** from one another, **help** one another to grow, and **pray** for one another.

We **worship** and **serve** our Lord together. We **rejoice** and **weep** together.

Diversity shouldn't be a problem in God's family, it's **our advantage**.

We're **not united** by our common **talents, hobbies, or tastes** in clothes and furniture.

There's a bond we often overlook, it's **sadly absent** from many of our **conversations**.

We need to **care about** and **talk about what God has to say about ...**

what's going on in the **news**, the **needs** in people's lives, our busy **schedules**,
our **families, work, school, and social times**.

We in this new relationship are the **Israel** talked about in the **New Testament**.

Redeemed Christians are all **heirs** according to the **promise** - the promise made to **Abraham**.

That covenant promise is **ours** - through the **promised Christ**.

The Creator of everything is our God and **we in Christ** are **his people** - his **spiritual family**.

We to **stand by one another**: to **represent** our Savior, and to **enjoy** him now and forever.

This is God's promise: but if you **live as if something else is your hope**, you live in **denial** of God's promise.

When you see the **world** around you in **rebellion** against God and his ways,

when you **don't understand difficult things** you have to deal with,

you need to **know his assurances**, and **rest in them**.

you need to **remember** that **he's your God**, and **you are one of his people**.

He **cares for you** and **does what's best for you** with eternal values in view.

He's doing the same in all the **others he gathers together** in his church.

They may be **different** in many ways important to us.

But **all believers** are the **heirs of his solemn promise** - and **that promise can't possibly fail**.

Note: Bible quotations are from the *English Standard Version* unless otherwise noted.

text

Galatians 3 ESV

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27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

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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.

Galatians 3 Greek

25 ἐλθούσης δὲ τῆς πίστεως οὐκέτι ὑπὸ παιδαγωγόν ἐσμεν.

26 Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ Θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ·

27 ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε.

28 οὐκ ἐν Ἰουδαίῳ οὐδὲ Ἑλληνι, οὐκ ἐν δούλῳ οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερῳ,

οὐκ ἐν ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς εἰς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

29 εἰ δὲ ὑμεῖς Χριστοῦ, ἄρα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ σπέρμα ἐστέ κατ' ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι.