

# **A DEFENCE OF THE AUTHENTIC GOSPEL: A STUDY OF GALATIANS**

## **(LESSON FIFTY)**

### ***“ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS”***

#### **GALATIANS 3:27-28**

#### **(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.*

Last week we stated that in verse **27**, Paul, having spoken in the previous verse of the Galatian believers as being “*in Christ*,” reminds them of **how** they became united with Christ. He explains that when they put their faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour, the Holy Spirit baptized, or placed them into Christ.

We made the point that the “baptism” of which Paul is speaking in this verse is **not** a reference to water baptism. He is not alluding to so-called “baptismal regeneration.” To use this verse as a “proof text” for the view that baptism is necessary for salvation, or that Paul is even referring to water baptism, is to ignore the context of the passage, as well as the overall context of the letter and of Scripture in general.

The overall context of Galatians is centered on Paul’s concern that some of the Galatian believers were turning from the authentic Gospel of grace to a false gospel of works (**Galatians 1:6-10**). The false gospel they were embracing was one that mixed God’s grace with the works of

the Law, including circumcision, as a requirement for being saved, much like those today who add baptism to faith as a requirement for salvation.

Paul's message in **Galatians** is very, very clear. It is summarized in chapter **2** and verse **16**: *“Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.”*

This context of justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, is seen throughout the first three chapters of **Galatians** and is reinforced in chapter **3** and verse **26**: *“for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.”* This verse, along with all other passages of Scripture dealing with salvation, makes it clear that salvation is “through faith in Christ Jesus,” and since water baptism must always be preceded by faith if it is to have any meaning at all, we can know that it is faith in Christ that saves us, not the water baptism that follows faith. While water baptism is important as a way of identifying us with Christ, it only has meaning if it comes from saving faith which always comes first.

The “baptism” of which Paul speaks in verse **27**, is of the introduction, or placing of a believing sinner into the new environment of Jesus Christ and the Church, which is His mystical Body. This union radically and permanently alters his or her condition and relationship to his or her previous environment or condition. 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.”*

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the personal and private experience that identifies the believing sinner with Christ, while water baptism is a public witness of the person's identification with Jesus Christ. In other words, water baptism is an outward picture of the inner work of the Holy Spirit.

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 defined by Christ and His salvation.

In verse **28**, Paul 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.*”

Brothers and sisters, it is important for us to understand that the Law that was given to Israel through Moses caused an immediate and bitter division to be set up between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Law also gave rise to significant differences between male and female, and between those who were free and those who were slaves.

However, in the Age of the New Covenant, all those differences have been removed. All those who have exercised faith in Jesus Christ, are the sons of God in Christ. All those who have been saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, are equal in the eyes of God the Father. All are equally justified in His eyes; all have equally been clothed in the righteousness of Christ; all have equally been made a new creation in Christ; all have equally been baptised, or placed by the Holy Spirit into Christ and into His Body, and all are equally blessed, or accepted in the Beloved. All believers have the Holy Spirit permanently indwelling them, and all of them have equally been promised an inheritance, “*that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in Heaven for [them]*” (**1 Peter 1:4**).

In **Galatians 3:28**, Paul is explaining to his readers that, in Christ, they have all been fully united with everyone else who is in Christ. There are no first and second class citizens in the Body of Christ. Our earthly,

superficial identifying marks create no value distinction between us in our heavenly Father's eyes. 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. Since none can be higher and none can be lower, we are all equal in the eyes of God.

This teaching is not based on the culture. It is not liberal, or conservative. It is not political in any way. It is the direct result of both the in-working and the out-working of the Gospel in the lives of the sons of God. It is not a statement about the various roles any Christian may be called to fill in this life, or the honour we may or may not be given on this side of eternity. It is a statement about our equal value in the eyes of God, and of how we should learn to view each other.

There is no place in the Body of Christ for **racial prejudice**, for Paul says, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek.*" In Christ, neither national or colour distinctions matter. There is no justification for racial partiality whatsoever in the church! In **Romans 2:11**, Paul plainly states, "*God shows no partiality.*" If we therefore, tolerate racial prejudice in our assembly, we are sinning against God!

In **Ephesians 2:11-22**, Paul writes the following:

*11 Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands—*

*12 remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*

*13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

*14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility*

*15 by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace,*

*16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.*

*17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near.*

*18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.*

*19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,*

*20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,*

*21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord.*

*22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*

In **Acts 13:1**, we read the following: “Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.” Here we have a reference to a prophet and/or teacher named Simeon, whose was called Niger. The word “Niger” is a Latin word meaning “black, or dark.”

The **New Living Translation** renders the verse as follows: “Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called “the black man”), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul.”

Apparently the church in Antioch was colour blind, as every church anywhere in the world should be!

There is no place in the Body of Christ for **social prejudice**, for Paul says, “*There is neither slave nor free.*” In Christ, social status has no significance whatsoever. This would have been an astonishing thought in the first century. It was possible in the first century church to have a slave who was an elder, giving spiritual oversight to his slave owner!

In **James 2:1-9**, James sternly warns his readers against social distinctions in the church. He writes,

*1 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.*

*2 For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in,*

*3 and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, “You sit here in a good place,” while you say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or, “Sit down at my feet,”*

*4 have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?*

*5 Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him?*

*6 But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court?*

*7 Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?*

*8 If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.*

*9 But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*

There is no place in the Body of Christ for **sexual prejudice**, for Paul says, *"There is no male and female."* Distinctions of sex do not obtain in Christ. Women, no less than men, find in Christ their Saviour and Lord. Gender is not a barrier to salvation, nor is it a hindrance to the development of the graces of the Christian life. One commentator makes the following remarks relative to this matter:

**"Galatians 3:26-4:7** almost explodes with implications for women. Not only are women released from the law, but they become sons of God with rights...In the Greek, verse **26** reads, *"You are all sons of God."* This is no minor point. In the patriarchal society of that day, sons and daughters had distinctly different rights-especially with regard to inheritance. Paul is making clear that **in the family of God**, women are not **daughters** (with the possibility of abridged rights) but **sons**. *'And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then also an heir, through God' (Galatians 4:6-7).* The Christian community is a new creation in Christ, and we are to live by a new rule...Trusting the Holy Spirit to guide us, believers must open the Word and ask how men and women are to live, work and worship together in this new creation."

Brothers and sisters, Paul is informing us in this verse that Jesus Christ is the answer to all the prejudice, bitterness, hatred, oppression, division and inequalities that exist on the earth. The only way that the divisions

that exist among human beings can be solved is in Christ Jesus, for Paul says, “*You are all **ONE** in Christ Jesus.*” One commentator notes that,

“Every believer stands on an equal footing before Jesus Christ: the footing of faith. No person is accepted for any other reason than faith. All persons who come to Jesus Christ come ...

- because they are ever so short of Christ
- because they are ever so different from Christ
- because they are ever so imperfect

Yet, Jesus Christ accepts them. Jesus Christ reaches out and embraces all believers despite their being so much less and so different from Him. Therefore, when we look at another believer and he differs from us, we do just what Jesus Christ did for us. We love, accept, and embrace him; differences do not matter. All that matters is love, acceptance, and brotherhood in Christ. Every true believer loves and stands in Jesus Christ. **Therefore, when we look at another believer we see him in Christ. We do not see the believer, but we see Christ covering the believer.** We pay no attention to his color, nationality, sex, social status, or any other differences. Differences just do not matter. All that matters is that we all grow into the image of Christ.”

Paul’s declaration in this verse must have been glorious news for the Galatian believers, for in their society the Gentiles were held in contempt by the Jews, slaves were considered to be only pieces of property, and women were often disregarded and disrespected.

This of course, does not mean that our race, social status, or sex is changed at conversion, but it does mean that these things are of no benefit, or handicap when it comes to our standing with God, or our spiritual relationship with Him through Christ. The Law perpetuated these distinctions, but God in His grace has declared all men to be on the same level that He might have mercy on all men.



**Philip Graham Ryken** states that,

“We have the best and the truest fellowship when we recognize our diversity, but see it as less important than our unity in Christ.”

**Kenneth Wuest** explains that,

“The individual differences between Jew and Greek, between slave and free, between male and female, are merged in that higher unity into which all believers are raised by the fact that they all have a common life in Christ Jesus. One heart now beats in all. The pulsating life of the Lord Jesus is the motive power. One mind guides all, the mind of Christ. One life is lived by all, the life of the Lord Jesus produced by the Holy Spirit in the various circumstances and relations of each individual believer's experience.”

**The Message** translates **Galatians 3:28** as follows:

*“In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.”*

Paul is saying, in effect to the Galatian believers what he said to the Ephesians, “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 both 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.”

My brothers and sisters, God is saying the same thing to us. The question is “Are we committed to living out the reality of what God has already accomplished in Christ Jesus, in our interactions with our fellow believers?”

Brothers and sisters, 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!

In his book *“Love in Hard Places,”* the noted New Testament scholar, **D. A. Carson**, has made an observation which I find very challenging. He writes,

*“I suspect that one of the reasons why there are so many exhortations in the New Testament for Christians to love other Christians is because this is not an easy thing to do...The church itself is not made up of natural ‘friends.’ It is made up of natural enemies. What binds us together is not common education, common race, common income levels, common politics, common nationality, common accents, common jobs, or anything of the sort. Christians come together, not because they form a natural collocation (not because they are naturally close to each other), but because they have been saved by Jesus Christ and owe him a common allegiance. In the light of this common allegiance, in light of the fact that they have all been loved by Jesus himself, they commit themselves to doing what he says-and he commands them to love one another. In this light, they are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus’ sake.”*

Brothers and sisters, such a situation is unique. It is not possible to find this kind of scenario anywhere else but in the church of Jesus Christ.

**The Grace Workshop Ministries** should not primarily refer to a building where we gather for worship, but rather to a community of believers who are increasingly speaking and practicing the truth in love, learning to deal with the deepest divisions in a Christ-like manner, resolving conflicts by engaging in loving confrontation, fellowshiping our differences, exercising appropriate church discipline and demonstrating redemptive love. And the only way that these things can happen is if the Gospel of the grace of God is preached, taught, understood, believed and applied to every area of our lives.