

We learned **last week** from the text that Grace and the Law are not in contradiction to each other, but rather they work together for the Law makes Grace both desirable and indispensable

- We know we need grace and we know the value of grace because we know the law
- We fully appreciate the Gospel of Grace because we have realized our wickedness
- This changes the way we view and observe the rules
- To be a grace-abuser is to under appreciate the Gospel of Grace, which is usually indicative of the fact that you have under realized your wickedness (and that from which you have been saved)

Now Paul will help us to squarely and securely locate our identity in relation to God, because of the grace we have received through the person and work of Christ

- And how that causes us to relate to God on a daily basis
- Again touching on the questions that everyone asks: What does God expect from me and how does God feel about me?

The weakness of the Law apart from Grace is that it causes us to see God as a Boss or Task-master

- (This is the error that the Galatians were slipping into)
 - It shapes our answer to the above questions and so shapes our motive for behavior
 - It also then shapes our perception of ourselves and others
- When in reality we are supposed to relate to **God as a loving Father**
 - Who fully accepts and perfectly adores us

Because of the failures of fathers in our (and every) culture we sometimes have some difficulty with this concept

- Paul anticipates this and so will encourage us in two things:
 - The **objective truth** of what Christ has done for us in making us children of God
 - The **subjective experience** that the Spirit brings us concerning the Father-ness of God
 - Who causes us to cry out, "**Abba, Father**"
 - An exclamation of **experienced love** based on objective truth
 - **How do we?** (We will get to that in a few minutes when we dip into Chapter 4)

In the closing verses of Chapter 3 Paul helps us to squarely and securely locate our identity in relation to Christ

- One of the keys to living a fruitful and fun Christian life is to know who you are **in Christ**

READ (3:26-29)

Let's break those verses down and spot very clearly who we are and how it has everything to do with Christ

v. 26 For **you** are all **children** [sons] **of God** | through faith **in** Christ Jesus

v. 27 **All who** have been **united** | **with** Christ | have **put on** Christ

v. 28 **You** are all **one** | **in** Christ Jesus

v. 29 **You** **belong** | **to** Christ

Notice that **you** are defined **by** and **in** relation **to** Christ (read above backwards)

A Christian is not simply someone who simply follows Christ's great teachings. A Christian is one who is *one with Christ in a personal relationship*.¹

Without a deep grasp of our position in Christ because of the gospel, we believe that salvation/happiness/blessing depends conditionally on something we are or do

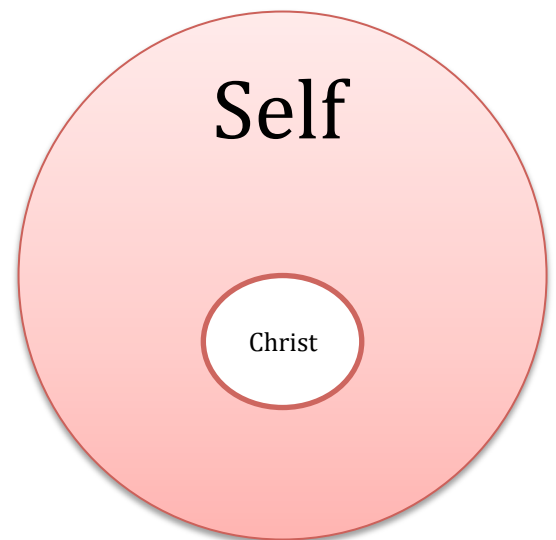
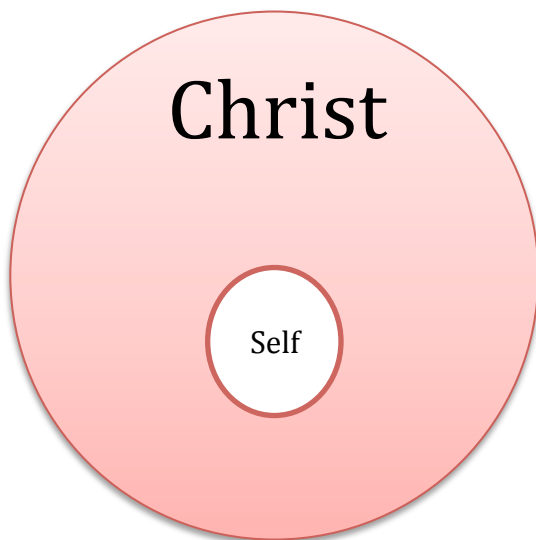
- So what we do is seek to build our identity on something besides Jesus

You were previously defined by what you did or did not do (positive or negative)

- But Christianity is about Christ and what he has done for you and then who you are in Him
- A whole new identity: **Children of God in Christ** (v. 26)
United with Christ (v. 27)
Clothed in Christ (v. 27)
United in Christ (v. 28)
Belonging to Christ (v. 29)

This is the correct identity of the Christian:

As opposed to:



Verse 26

Children is "**sons**" in the Greek (non-gender specific language at that time)—but you get the idea

- But this is important in the original context where daughters usually did not inherit anything
- Paul brings out the fact that our relationship to God as Father is far superior to anyone else as Father
- And the equality of all people as children before Him (Cf. **verse 28**)

At the same time this verse makes clear that God is not a Universal Father

- He is the Universal Creator—having brought all things into existence
- He is the Universal King—ruling over and sustaining all that He created

¹ Fritz Ridenour, *How to be a Christian Without Being Religious* (Venture, CA: Regal, 2002), 58.
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- We only become His children **through faith in Christ Jesus**
- Prior to putting our faith in Jesus Christ, Scripture calls us the enemies of God (See **Romans 5:10**)
- But Jesus has taken the wrath of God for us and **turned His wrath into kindness** for us
- But we only experience that **through faith in Christ Jesus**
 - We no longer view God as the Judge we must fear because as the Creator and King He has laws and decrees which have condemned us
 - Nor as a Boss or task-master that we must serve out of painful duty (613 rules)
 - He is now The Perfect Father who's love we experience daily, and who is pleased with us
 - And we love him!

Verse 27

Don't misunderstand what Paul is saying about baptism

- He has been saying over and over that the only way we are made right with God is **through faith in Jesus Christ**
- So this cannot possibly mean that baptism itself **unites** us with Jesus Christ—that merely being dipped in water makes us a **child of God**
 - We need to give Paul a little credit here as not contradicting himself in just 2 sentences
- It is **faith** that **unites** us to Christ
 - It is baptism that **signifies** that uniting **outwardly** and **visibly**
- We are **children of God by faith inwardly and truly** (v. 26) and in **baptism outwardly and visibly** (v. 27)

Then he says we have **put on Christ like putting on new clothes**

- In most ancient cultures there were clear lines of demarcation involved in the process of growing up
 - In **Jewish culture** a young man became a "son of the law" when he was 12. This meant he was God's and not merely his father's anymore and had effectively passed into manhood
 - In the **Greek culture** at the age of 18 a young man's long hair was cut and offered to the Gods
 - In **Roman culture**, somewhere between the age of 14 and 17, there was a ceremony where a young man took off the toga he had usually worn and exchanged it for the *toga virilis*, which was the normal toga worn by adults
 - This may be the imagery Paul is invoking here as he speaks of **baptism** as this clear line of demarcation involving our union with Christ, whereby we **put on Christ like putting on new clothes**
 - Baptism is a clear line a demarcation that communicates a passing from the **old life/identity** to the **new life/identity**
 - Like putting on the new toga, we **put on Christ (like putting on new clothes)**

Think about the concept of clothing and the imagery this creates (It is much more than utilitarian)

- What clothing does is **identify us** with a **certain group**—no question about that
 - We are clearly identified with Christ and those who belong to him
- What clothing does is **cover** all of our **flaws**—people with less flaws wear less clothing
 - Our flaws (sins) are many, but we are now covered with and by Christ
 - We are no longer identified by our flaws and failures, but by God's love made evident in Christ
- Clothing is something we have to be conscious of **putting on every day**
 - We actually have deep fears of not being clothed (remember those dreams)
 - We are conscious of our relationship with Christ daily

- Once we put clothing on it is there—**closer to us** than anything else
 - This closeness and fit of clothing determines how we feel—comfortable, frumpy, sexy, formal, etc
 - And the way that you feel affects the way you behave and how we relate to others
 - Christ is to be that near and His person and character and work in and on us should shape how we feel/behave/interact

Verse 28

Literally, “**You are all one person in Christ**”

If we have been united with Christ than we have in some very real and transformative way been **united to one another**

- So much so that the things that would normally divide us (race, status, gender) are eclipsed by what unites us!
 - It is not that they do not exist, it is that they do not ultimately matter in light of our new identity
 - They are still there, but do not create barriers to loving fellowship (that is the point in context of **Peter’s breaking fellowship** from the Gentile Christians)
 - They are to be appreciated as God’s manifold creation—but not exalted as defining factors relationally

Nor does this equality abandon roles

- For example in contemporary Christian culture and academia many are saying that this verse means that there are **no role distinctions** between men and women in the context of **marriage** and **ministry**
- You can wrestle though that issue from other NT texts (the whole notion is beyond the scope of this sermon), but there is no way that you can say that this text is saying that
- = To dishonestly wrench it from it’s context
- The NT as a whole does affirm the equality of the sexes **in essence**, but also **affirms distinctions** in roles
 - Cf. Jesus and the Father (To say that the role of Christ as submitted to the Father makes Him of less **dignity, value** and **essence** is to deny the Biblical teaching of the Trinity)
 - If Jesus can be **co-equal with** the Father and **yet submitted** in His role as the son then so can people one to another

All the ways that this ancient culture (and ours!) **assigned or denied value** (race, social status, gender) are abolished in our equality before Christ as redeemed sinners

- Further destroying the possibility of pronouncing others to be ‘Good Christians’ or ‘Bad Christians’
- There is only one sort of Christian—a person united to Christ by faith and so united to others in an attitude of equality cultivating love

“He does not say we are all identical or interchangeable but rather that we are all “one.” Here we see most clearly the radical social implications of the gospel. It is a radical statement. It means any two people who are Christians have more in common with each other than with non-Christians of their own genders, social status, or race. It means I am a Christian before I am any race, etc. It means that all the barriers that separate people in the world into warring factions come down in Christ.”²

A few weeks ago I heard a report of something heartbreaking that happened at our Carpinteria Campus...

- It was an utter failure to realize the truth of the Gospel and who we are in Christ

Verse 29

² Tim Keller, *Galatians Leader’s Guide*, (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2003), 83.
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Speaks of us being **heirs** of God's promise to Abraham of justification by faith

Chapter 4 begins with Paul using an analogy to explain how we are brought into this place of sonship before God, which makes us heirs

4:1-3

Paul is still discussing how the Law worked before Christ came

- The promise of Christ was made to Abraham
- But until Christ came humanity was like this child who was an heir to everything but was not able to receive anything yet and so was not much better off than a slave

The phrase, "**We were slaves to the basic spiritual principles of this world**" is difficult

- Scholars debate its meaning
- Suffice it to say for our purposes here, that while under the law we were not free in Christ—whatever else may have had influence over us or even enslaved us (idols, false gods, demons, wrong understandings of the workings of life or approaches to life, whatever) kept us from relating to God rightly until Christ came

Verses 4-5

This passage speaks of our **redemption** and **adoption**

- We have been bought **out of slavery** and brought into **sonship**
- We have freedom from liability **and** have been given rights as children
- Christ removed our **legal status as enslaved, indebted sinners** and changed it to **sons deserving great honor and wealth**
- The great exchange that happened on the Cross was that **our record or wickedness** was transferred to Him and **His record or righteousness** was transferred to us!
- **Justification** is that by which we are **both** (1) declared innocent (though we are guilty) and (2) treated excellent (though we are undeserving)
- We must understand that we have both: The transfer of **our sins to Jesus** and the transfer of **His rights and privileges to us!!**
- To recognize only the removal of sins is to be only "**half-saved by grace**"!
 - That was the failure of the Galatians
 - To believe they are forgiven at first but then must perform well to be treated well by God
 - We sometimes think that **the slate has been wiped clean**—great—but now we have to fill it with good things
 - So, when we fail, we think God is looking at a freshly marred record and treating us accordingly
 - But this text shows us that **Jesus not only removed the curse that we deserved, but gave us the blessings that He deserved!**³
 - When we get to heaven we will be welcomed as heroes (because we are in Christ)
 - Because we have become **sons and so heirs** and an inheritance is promised and given not earned

The summation is that in being united with Christ, **what is true of Him is now true of us**

- We are treated as though we had done everything right, because Christ did so on our behalf!

- That is why Jesus was able to pray in John 17:23, "Father... let the world know that you have... loved them even as you have loved Me"

Verses 6-7

Abba, which is the Aramaic diminutive of Father that Jesus used in speaking to the Father, means "daddy"

- Nobody referred to the God of Israel this way until Jesus did (Mark 14:26)
- When Paul is saying that we too use this phrase he is speaking of the fact that we have **legally inherited** all the **relational rights** of Christ!
- We can approach God with this sort of radical intimacy and favor!
- What the Holy Spirit does is help us experience this truth!

It is one thing to hear that objective truth, but it is another to experience it

- These verses talk about God's provision for us to experience His love as children!
- Christ has brought us to God, the Spirit helps us to **experience** God

"Cry out"

- The translation of a Greek word that connotes **a loud cry of passionate feeling**
- The idea here of our communicating to and relating to God is that it is organic, passionate, and real
 - It is not rote prayers or elegant words
 - It is a child relating to a Father (It is Daisy when I walk through the door)
 - When I come home (near) she cries out
 - Christ has brought us home (near) to God and so we cry out
- When Daisy cries out "Daddy" there is (inherent in that cry) **a confidence** that I love her completely and do in fact reciprocate that exclamation of nearness and love
 - This is the truth of our having been **adopted** and made **real children** of God!

Christ through His work on the Cross and our faith in Him **changes our position** before God, but the Spirit **creates in us a passion** for God

Through the Son we become God's children **legally** (4:4-5), receiving a new status, but through the Spirit we become God's children **experientially** (4:6-7)

A real, right and true experience of God's love

- Romans 5:5 (NLT)
- ... We know how dearly God loves us, **because** he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love.

This work of the Spirit is based on the work of the Son

- The profound **subjective experience** is based on the **objective truth**, not the other way around
- The **Spirit's job** is to take **doctrinal truths** and make them **alive** in our hearts

How can we give ourselves to the work of the Spirit?

- (1) We take time to study and reflect on the work of the Son for us (study and meditate on Scripture), asking the Spirit to make it real for us
- (2) We take time throughout the day to relate to God as loving Father and not cruel task-master (as sons and daughters not slaves) (To cry out "**Abba Father**")

"It is as we ponder doctrinal truth worshipfully, continually applying what we read, that the work of the Spirit occurs. It is as we reflect and study and work through and rejoice in the truths of God's word that the Holy Spirit begins to make them thrilling, melting, disturbing, healing, shining."⁴

⁴ Tim Keller, *Galatians Leader's Guide*, (Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2003), 87.
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