

Sunday May 23rd 2010
A Family Focus

1). Ga 3:26 *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 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 neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

a). Our scripture here from Galatians Chapter 3 is I am sure very familiar to us and contains what is now, for us, self evident truth. But, despite what we already know, let's revisit these verses again in some detail so as to see how they relate to our own experience.

b). V26 gives the assertion that we are all sons of God through faith. And it is of course through faith and faith alone that we enter into relationship with the Lord. It is never through our own efforts.

c). Our relationship with the Lord begins with salvation by grace through faith, the only foundation that can be laid, the eternal salvation of our spirit, and then moves from faith to faith as our spiritual maturity develops towards the salvation of the soul - Ro 1:16 ¶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."*

d). Faith then is never stagnant; it must either be growing or diminishing. And which of these two it is will be determined by the seriousness with which we engage with the Word, both in our understanding and in our application.

e). The Word of God is just that, whether it be spoken from the mouth of Paul or uttered through the mouth of a donkey. Whether it is presented with eloquence or through stuttering lips. The wise will hear God's voice in His word however it is presented. Those who can only hear with partiality will remain like those in the church in Corinth - 1Co 3:4 *For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal? 5 ¶ Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one 6 I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. 7 So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.*

f). And so within the context of the letter to the Galatians the assertion that we are all sons of God through faith must take us beyond the believing faith of spirit salvation and be looking to the faith that results in the salvation of the soul.

g). This would be the same premise that we see in - Ro 8:14 *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*

h). The words 'in Christ Jesus' at the end of v26 are to be separated from what has gone before. This verse does not say that we are 'sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus', but that we are sons of God through faith with the result that we are 'in Christ Jesus'.

i). This is a subject that is taken up further in v28.

2). V 27 then tells us - 27 *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

a). And again, although it is true that at the point of our eternal salvation we are all baptized in the Holy Spirit and, as a result, have a positional standing in Christ, contextually here we are still dealing with issues beyond the point of our initial salvation. Although all Christians have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and are part of the body of Christ, not all Christians have put on or are in the process of putting on Christ.

b). Rather, we can see how baptism and putting on Christ are linked, by remembering that which is symbolized through baptism - the death of self to walk in newness of life, by the power of the Spirit.

c). We could make sense of this then in the light of the following scriptures – Ro 6:5 *For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,*
2Ti 2:11 *This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.*

d). Putting on Christ of itself necessitates the dying of our flesh as we cannot wear both at the same time - Eph 4:24 *and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.*

e). Ro 13:14 *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.*

f). And so if we combine this thought with that which we saw in v26 we will realize that the process of going from faith to faith cannot be separated from the process of putting off the old man and putting on the new, of making no provision for the flesh and putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, they are both one and the same thing and will have the following result - 2Co 3:18 *But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

g). As we progress from faith to faith so we shall be transformed from glory to glory.

h). With the final fulfillment of this taking place at the Judgment Seat where those who have progressed from glory to glory will receive their glorified bodies apart from sin, restoring them to the image and likeness of God just as we saw with Adam and the Woman in the Garden before the fall – 1Jo 3:2 *Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*

3). Then in v28 we read - 28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

a). This seemingly simple verse has the most profound implications. Now clearly in the first instance we will understand that prior to being a Christian, from God's perspective, we would be classified as either a Jew or a non-Jew, a Greek/Gentile. Once we believe on Christ however we cease to be a Jew or a Greek/ Gentile and in Christ we become part of the one new man, a Christian. And the wall of separation that existed between Jews and Gentiles has been removed in Christ.

b). However our verse goes much further than this – we see that in Christ Jesus 'there is neither slave nor free nor male nor female'. Now clearly at the moment we become a Christian our social position does not change and nor does our gender. But as Christians, in Christ, in pursuit of the Kingdom, there are no special conditions that come into play because of our social status or gender. Rather faithful obedience to the word is required of all irrespective of their status, position or gender. It has never been about who we are or what we are, but always our faithful obedience in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

c). 2Co 5:14 *For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; 15 and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. 16 ¶ Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

d). Once we are in Christ we are a new creation, and this is a very literal concept – If we go back to the foundation we will remember that Adam was a completely new creation brought into being to replace the incumbent ruler Satan and his angels. The nation of Israel was then an entirely new creation, in Jacob, also for the purpose of rulership in the place of Satan within the Theocratic Kingdom - Isa 43:1 ¶ *But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine.*

e). We can see then that God always brings into existence that which never existed before, a new creation, for the purpose of rulership. And so if a nation other than Israel was to inherit the Kingdom of the Heavens, that nation would have to be comprised of a new creation - Mt 21:43 *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.*

f). Nation = Greek – ‘ethnos’ = a race (as of the same habit), i.e. a tribe; specially, a foreign (non-Jewish) one (usually, by implication, pagan):--Gentile, heathen, nation, people.

g). And here of course is the extraordinary thing – any person, no matter who they are or where in the world they may be located, once they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ automatically become part of a totally separate and totally distinct people group. A unique people group that until about 2000 years ago never existed before. And although each person who is eternally saved may remain in their original geographical location they are no longer to regard themselves as a citizen of the nation in which they find themselves, but as someone having citizenship in the coming Kingdom of the heavens. And such a mindset as this can only come about through faith as a result of the renewing of our minds as we allow the Spirit of God, through the word of God, to transform us - Php 3:20 *For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,*

h). Old things have passed away and all things have become new. For the eternally redeemed all allegiance to Gentile world power under the present system of rulership has passed away – this is no longer our focus; all that is connected with our natural birth, which is also within the present system of rulership has passed away too – this is no longer to determine the way we live.

i). It is presented this way in - 1Pe 1:18 *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

j). Now there was a time when the way we lived, how we conducted ourselves and what took place in our thought life was dictated ‘by tradition from our fathers’. It is what we learned within the family and in a broader context what we learned from our culture. However, this way of living, by tradition and/or culture is described here as aimless – it is vain, it has no value in the one area that matters, our faithful obedience in pursuit of the Kingdom. For the eternally saved Christian it is no longer tradition and culture that shapes our lives but our submission to the word of God. It is the wisdom of God and no longer the wisdom of men that we live by - Col 1:13 *He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,*

k). Scripture transcends time, geography, culture and ethnicity. And although this is true there is still a choice to be made to make what is true become a reality in our lives especially when these very things have woven their way into the fabric of 'church' life.

l). This has presented a serious challenge to all of us. As it must do for everyone who seriously pursues the Kingdom. But it is a challenge nonetheless that we all must be willing to embrace. We cannot help but remember the instruction given to Abram - Ge 12:1 ¶ *Now the LORD had said to Abram: "Get out of your country, From your family And from your father's house, To a land that I will show you.*

m). And that this is exactly what Rebekah did in following Abraham's oldest servant to become Isaac's wife, and the very thing that Ruth is commended for - Ru 2:11 *And Boaz answered and said to her, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband, and how you have left your father and your mother and the land of your birth, and have come to a people whom you did not know before. 12 "The LORD repay your work, and a full reward be given you by the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge."*

n). None of this of course is coincidental, but is rather through repetitive types, trying to get our attention so that we may take it seriously.

o). At the risk of being repetitive myself, let's make it very clear – without leaving father and mother and the land of your birth there can be no marriage to the Son of promise.

4). And just so we don't miss the significance of this the subject is repeated again in - Heb 11:13 *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.*

a). If we have seen the promises and are assured of them and have embraced them, even though they remain in the future, then we will confess that we are strangers and pilgrims on the earth – we will realize that we are a nation, like Israel, who is dispersed amongst the Gentile nations of the world as we wait for the ingathering to our homeland.

b). And v14 clearly teaches us that if this is truly what we believe then we are declaring plainly that we seek a homeland and as a result God is not ashamed to be called our God, for He has prepared a city for us.

c). However, we also need to take note of v15 - *15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return.*

d). This is exactly what Orpah did, this is exactly what the first generation of Israel to come out of Egypt did and we know the consequences for both.

e). If we still look to a political system or an economic system to provide our security and our future then we are committing spiritual harlotry and we can kiss the Kingdom goodbye just as Orpah kissed Naomi and turned back.

f). But we can hope by now that none of us would be that foolish. And if we are, we can thank God that there is still time to repent. There is still time to get oil in our lamp before the Bridegroom comes.

5). The Third Chapter of Galatians from which we took our opening scripture then concludes in v29 with - *29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

a). Again it is true to say that all the eternally redeemed automatically have a positional standing 'in Christ' and are therefore Abraham's seed, as Christ is Abraham's seed and all have the potential to be heirs according to the promise. But as we have seen throughout we are dealing with issues beyond the foundation of spirit salvation; issues to do with the salvation of the soul.

b). And if we back up to near the beginning of Galatians Chapter 3 this is what we find - *Ga 3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.*

c). And again in - *Ro 4:13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

6). And so as we bring our message today to its conclusion let us remember that it is through that which is symbolized in our father and our mother and the land of our birth that the enemy of our soul has access to us. Facing these things and embracing the truth rather than the lie is the challenge common to us all – *1Pe 5:9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world. 10 ¶ But may the God of all grace,*

who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

a). These are the good works prepared beforehand for us to walk in them and so - Ga 6:9 *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

b). Let us be determined yet again to be steadfast and immovable and let us remember our brothers and sisters in the world who struggle with the same things as us.

c). Let us be those who are spoken of in - Heb 10:39 *But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul*