

I.N.I.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost  
July 17, 2011  
Gal. 3:26-29

In Christ Jesus, Who is the only-begotten Son of God the Father, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

One of the greatest gifts God has given to us human beings is the gift of children and as I've come to learn—also the great gift of grandchildren. Everything we own or use in this world comes from outside of us, but our children come from us, they are part of us, part of our flesh and blood. They have our DNA, personalities, looks, blood type. They are our sons and daughters.

But unfortunately, by nature they are also sons and daughters of someone else. By nature, our children, together with every single baby ever conceived is a child of Satan. That sounds scary and frightening and it is. Scripture is very clear when it declares that we were brought forth in iniquity and in sin did our mothers conceive us; and that by nature we are **DEAD IN TRESPASSES AND SINS**, under the **WRATH OF GOD, ENEMIES OF GOD**, and children of Satan. That is why we all need to be born again, spiritually reborn through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel both in the Sacrament of Baptism and in the preached and written Word. Then we are transferred from Satan's domain to God's kingdom, from being a child of Satan under God's wrath and condemnation to being a child of God under grace and forgiveness, from the chains of darkness to the chambers of glory. This being born again is another term for conversion, being brought to faith.

In our study so far in Paul's letter to the Galatians, Paul has been fighting against some so called Jewish Christians who were preaching that the full Gospel entails not only faith in Christ but also a keeping of the Old Testament laws and ceremonies. Paul is so upset and frustrated by the Galatians being hoodwinked into following this "other gospel" that he says in the first two verses of cha. 3, **O FOOLISH GALATIANS! WHO HAS BEWITCHED YOU THAT YOU SHOULD NOT OBEY THE TRUTH, BEFORE WHOSE EYES JESUS CHRIST WAS CLEARLY PORTRAYED AMONG YOU AS CRUCIFIED? THIS ONLY I WANT TO LEARN FROM YOU; DID YOU RECEIVE THE SPIRIT BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW, OR BY THE HEARING OF FAITH?**

The answer of course is obvious. The Galatians were filled with the Holy Spirit when they heard the Word and the Spirit moved their hearts to repent and believe the Good News of Jesus Christ. It was not when they were dead in their sins believing that they had to keep the laws in order to be saved. Paul continues, **THEREFORE KNOW THAT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE OF FAITH ARE SONS OF ABRAHAM...SO THEN THOSE WHO ARE OF FAITH ARE BLESSED WITH BELIEVING ABRAHAM.** The Jews were not real spiritual children of Abraham by birth and nationality, they were only his spiritual children through faith, and so are we. Paul further writes, **THAT THE BLESSING OF ABRAHAM MIGHT COME UPON THE GENTILES IN CHRIST JESUS, THAT WE MIGHT RECEIVE THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT THROUGH FAITH.**

That brings us then to the words of this morning's sermon text—chapter 3:26-29. Paul now directs his words to **BOTH** the Gentile and Jewish believers in Galatia. He says, **FOR YOU ARE ALL SONS OF GOD THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS.** Notice Paul did not say, **You are all sons of God because you were born a Jew, or are circumcised, because you follow the regulations and ceremonies of the law, because you live in the torah, the old testament law, because you come to church regularly.** No, all who are sons of God are so through faith in Jesus Christ. This should certainly humble these false teaching Jewish Christians who put much confidence in their being "sons of Abraham" and in the works they did. This statement would also help these Gentile Christians remain firm and confident in Paul's teaching of faith alone for salvation

and eternal life.

These Gentiles were at one time far off, strangers and foreigners from the kingdom of God. Now they are no longer aliens, foreigners and strangers to God, they are His sons and daughters, in a new, intimate, real relationship with the Heavenly Father. And this relationship is theirs not "because of" or "on account of" their faith, but "through" faith. Faith alone clings to this message of "sonship." Even as God the Father declared about Jesus, **"THIS IS MY BELOVED SON IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED;** He declares that through His only-begotten Son that we are all His sons and well pleasing to Him.

Paul continues in vs. 27. **FOR AS MANY OF YOU AS WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST HAVE PUT ON CHRIST.** To be baptized into Christ is an expression which we can understand only if we know what baptism is. It is a means of grace, a way by which God confers, bestows and gives His grace to us. It is the Gospel in Baptism which therefore gives us all the gifts of salvation. In Baptism the Holy Spirit works to create faith in the hearts of some; Paul calls it a **WASHING OF REGENERATION** and to strengthen faith in the hearts of others; Paul calls it a **RENEWING OF THE HOLY GHOST.** In Romans 6:3-4 Paul writes this about Baptism, **OR DO YOU NOT KNOW THAT AS MANY OF US AS WERE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST JESUS WERE BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH? THEREFORE WE WERE BURIED WITH HIM THROUGH BAPTISM INTO DEATH, THAT JUST AS CHRIST WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD BY THE GLORY OF THE FATHER, EVEN SO WE ALSO SHOULD WALK IN NEWNESS OF LIFE.** His death is our death so that His life may be our life.

When we are baptized into the family of God, with Christ as its center, we are also clothed with Christ. We, as it were, wear Jesus, we have been covered by Him and we put Him on like a garment. When we are born into this world, we are not only born, physically naked, with no clothes on, but spiritually naked, with absolutely no goodness, no righteousness of our own. We wear the same sinful clothing that our first father, Adam wore, our sinful flesh. But in baptism we get a whole new set of clothes as we put on Christ. Christ is our garment of salvation, our robe of righteousness so that now our Father in heaven looks down and does not see our sins, our sinful flesh and all of its ugly, corrupt nature, but He sees His Son.

On Calvary when God looked down on His Son, He saw all of us, sinners, deserving of death and damnation. Now through baptism in Christ, God does not see us in our sins deserving of death, but He sees His Son in perfect righteousness covering us. That is the great exchange that Paul speaks of in II Cor. 5:21. **FOR HE MADE HIM (CHRIST) WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN FOR US, THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM** and that exchange Isaiah pictures for us in cha. 53:4-6: **SURELY HE HAS BORNE OUR GRIEFS AND CARRIED OUR SORROWS; YET WE ESTEEMED HIM STRICKEN, SMITTEN BY GOD, AND AFFLICTED. BUT HE WAS WOUNDED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HE WAS BRUISED FOR OUR INIQUITIES; THE CHASTISEMENT FOR OUR PEACE WAS UPON HIM, AND BY HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED. ALL WE LIKE SHEEP HAVE GONE ASTRAY; WE HAVE TURNED EVERY ONE, TO HIS OWN WAY AND THE LORD HAS LAID ON HIM THE INIQUITY OF US ALL.**

The Christian wears Jesus--His forgiveness, His blood, His righteousness, peace, comfort, joy, salvation and life. That's how God sees His baptized sons and daughters.

So as we **LIVE AS SONS OF GOD** we see that Jesus is:

**I: THE SOURCE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP** with our Heavenly Father.

That leads us to our second point.

**II: THE BLESSINGS OF OUR RELATIONSHIP**

We read vs. 28-29: **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. AND IF YOU ARE CHRIST'S, THEN YOU ARE ABRAHAM'S SEED; AND HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE.**

In Christ there is no male or female, no young or old, no Jew or Gentile, no slave or free man. On earth in our society there will always be differences in nationalities and races, in sexes and social status, in roles, rights and freedoms, some of which God even commands in His Word, but spiritually in Christ we are all one. Paul writes in Eph. 4:4-6 **THERE IS ONE BODY AND ONE SPIRIT, JUST AS YOU WERE CALLED IN ONE HOPE OF YOUR CALLING; ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM; ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL, WHO IS ABOVE ALL, AND THROUGH ALL, AND IN YOU ALL.** In Rom. 10:12 Paul writes, **FOR THERE IS NO DISTINCTION BETWEEN JEW AND GREEK, FOR THE SAME LORD OVER ALL IS RICH TO ALL WHO CALL UPON HIM.**

Paul again is attacking the false teaching of keeping the law in order to be saved. It doesn't matter what one does as a Jew or Gentile, as a male or female, as one rich and free or poor and enslaved, nothing we do makes us a son or daughter of God. We are His children only by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Paul is again here pleading with these Jewish Christians to turn away from their building up of barriers between themselves and the Gentile believers and to see the freedom they have in Christ and the unity that is theirs with the Gentile Christians.

Paul concludes this section by going back to the beginning. **IF YOU ARE CHRIST'S, THEN YOU ARE ABRAHAM'S SEED...** Christ was Abraham's seed; therefore they and we also are, for we have put on Christ. Paul wrote much the same thing to the Romans when he tried to explain to them that "being of Israel" does not mean being descendant of the physical nation of Israel. We read, **FOR THEY ARE NOT ALL ISRAEL WHO ARE OF ISRAEL, NOR ARE THEY ALL CHILDREN BECAUSE THEY ARE THE SEED OF ABRAHAM; BUT, IN ISAAC YOUR SEED SHALL BE CALLED. THAT IS, THOSE WHO ARE THE CHILDREN OF THE FLESH, THESE ARE NOT THE CHILDREN OF GOD; BUT THE CHILDREN OF THE PROMISE ARE COUNTED AS THE SEED.**

The Jewish believers have nothing over the Gentile believers; they are all Abraham's seed through faith, not through physical descent. But even greater yet, they are all heirs according to the promise.

As true sons and daughters do you realize, do you really know and understand what is yours, what has been promised to you as your inheritance? We will equally inherit everything that God has given and will ever give to His Son Jesus--a Kingdom in which to rule with Christ forever and ever--perfect peace and joy, everlasting life in that new heaven and new earth.

All of this is all ours, because we are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Why is it then that Satan and our sinful flesh get us to live as if we are orphans, or as if we are still under Satan's control? We so often live in fear and anxiety, in worry and doubt as to our future and our children's future as if we have no loving, forgiving Father to watch over us and care for us. As children of God, sons of God through faith in Jesus we are assured of a loving Heavenly Father who will protect us, provide for us and preserve us in saving faith through the working of the Holy Spirit through His Word. May we confidently live with these promises and these blessings in mind so that we will then daily **LIVE AS SONS OF GOD.** Amen.