

All One in Christ

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[0 : 00] Okay, I'm just going to read that short passage from Galatians chapter 3 and from verse 24.

And just say a few words about that. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith.

But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is no male or female. You are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then your Abram's offspring errs according to the promise.

Just want to say a few words for a few minutes before moving on. I think this is a reminder to us of our call to be a child of God and what it means to belong to Jesus and to be those who belong.

[1 : 00] And there is always gospel implications for that. And I think it was one of the problems that the Galatian church had was that they weren't really thinking through the implications of what Jesus had done for them.

And it was damaging because therefore they had a damaging perspective. They were high jack kind of. The church was hijacked by theological infighting about the nature of grace, what it looked like, who could be called believers, the place of the law.

And it all became a bit messy and a bit of a power struggle and a consuming battle for them. And it was unhelpful because they were brandishing, some of the false teachers were brandishing their interpretations of truth in such a way that made it a completely different gospel and was alienating some people from the gospel.

They were using their theology as a stick to beat other people with for power and control. And that meant that the church in Galatia, which Paul was writing to, became very insular, became focused in itself.

It wasn't so much as about the Lord's kingdom come. It was about the Galatian kingdom come. There was opposing factions within the church's internal battles.

[2 : 20] And they've lost their focus on loving God and loving their neighbor. And it became all about themselves and about survival and about what they thought and about their theology.

And of course that inevitably led to division in chapter 5 and verse 15, we have these words from Paul, but if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you're not consumed by one another. So there was this provocation and there was this envy of one another. And it was in the name of Jesus in some ways, because they were at least in the name of their own theological position. But it brought division to them and it meant that there was... They were revealing qualities in the church that actually come very naturally to all of us.

And they weren't living out the gospel of grace and they weren't recognizing the truth that we read at the beginning there from chapter 3 and verses 24, 29, neither Jew, Greek, neither slave nor free, male nor female, you are all one in Jesus Christ.

[3 : 30] And that's a great reminder to us of the worldwide kingdom of grace to which we belong this evening here in St. Columbus.

If our theology, if our understanding of God and of grace puts a heavy burden on us or makes us feel constantly guilty and demands more of us all the time in a pressurized way, if we're more concerned about the purity of other people or whether other people think like me, then thinking about our own hearts and about the gospel in our own hearts.

Or even if we see mission as something that is motivated either by pride, the amazing things we know, or by guilt, I've got to do this because I have to.

It's an unhealthy perspective because grace is an amazing thing. And we belong to an amazing God. And it's incredible to be overwhelmed by His love.

I think God always wants us to remember two things in relation to our belonging to this great gospel of grace.

[4 : 42] One is if I'm in heaven at the end, which I believe I will be by grace and because of what God has done, it is because of grace alone.

Grace alone, that's what enables me to get, not by my good works, not by my theology, not by anything else. The amazing thing is I'll be there because of God's grace.

And also heaven, the new heavens and the earth which we mentioned and talked about this morning will be a host. Heaven will host a multinational, multi-ethnic, celebratory kingdom of all kinds of people, of all kinds of different theological backgrounds, of different nationalities, of different races and male and female altogether.

There'll be Arminians, Calvinists, Presbyterians, Cessatianists, Charismatics, Baptists, Presbyterians and everything in between. And even some Bavincians will be there.

Sorry, I had to get that in. But there will be everyone. And we need to remember in our unity who will share glory with us and the importance of God's grace so that as a church we're always going to be and always have to be outward looking in the way that the Galatian church had become insular and opposite to what the Galatian church had become.

[6 : 01] So in our Christian lives and in our belonging to Sincere's family, it's not all about Sincere's. It's easy to lose our perspective and get bogged down and just think it's all about what we're doing, especially maybe for us as leaders to do that.

We're always to be those who are welcoming the nations that come towards us. We're always to be interested in supporting mission in other nations and in the nations that come to the city in commitment and in empathy and in joy and sharing God's vision for the world as our neighbor.

Because remember even on the cross, Jesus Christ is looking out for others for the joy set before Him, not thinking of Himself. So we will be outward looking and therefore as a result we seek not to be by God's grace disunited but united, not divided but united with this vision.

Generous towards other Christians who think differently from us but also passionate that there's no other gospel. And a recognition that we need others and it's good to love others who have a different perspective as we learn from them.

And a genuine commonality in our understanding of the Kingdom and of Christianity and of grace that creates doors and not walls, both locally, nationally and internationally.

[7 : 27] And we rejoice in that unity that we can share. So as Mary was saying, that's our goal and that's our vision and that's the perspective we have. Why is that? Because it's right, because it's biblical and because it's very powerful today.

You know, we've seen the world increasingly polarized and sometimes the church getting sucked into that. Much suspicion, much polarization, much hate within the world.

Now we've got to stand up for the truth but we have to do it in such a way that is united as Christians and also gracious as we reach out with the gospel.

We have such good news, it is a revolution and we are to be reminded of the unity that the gospel brings and the church is to reflect that unity of being neither dune or Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, you are all one in Jesus Christ.

If you are Christ's, then you're Abrams offspring, heirs according to the promise. Amen. So just a few thoughts on that verse this evening.