

Galatians 3:26-29

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Date: 04 September 2011

Preacher: David MacPherson

[0 : 00] believe in Jesus? Are you trusting in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? To put it in, in other words, do you have faith in Jesus Christ?

These are questions that each of us can answer. I don't know what the answer is that you would give to these questions. Imagine for a moment if I were at Union Square right now, on a Sunday morning at Union Square in that big atrium where people come in and then go their separate ways, and I were to approach, say, 20 people and had the opportunity of grasping their attention and saying to them, friend, you must have faith in Jesus Christ. Imagine if I were to do that. How do you think those poor victims would respond to this insistence on my part, you must have faith in Jesus Christ?

Well, I imagine most would conclude that I was a complete weirdo, but perhaps some might be prepared to respond to my contention. And maybe a question that one or other might reasonably pose would be, well, why? Why? Why do I have to have faith in Jesus Christ? Answer me that question. And I want to attempt to answer that question in the light of the passage before us in Paul's letter to the Galatians in chapter 3, the verses that we've read from verse 26 through to verse 29. In this passage, we have presented to us what we could describe as the benefits of faith in Jesus Christ. And the benefits, as I hope we'll discover and as I hope will be very clear and evident to you, the benefits are beyond compare. Nothing and no one in this world could even begin to offer you what you can know and enjoy by trusting in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. In synthesis, we can say that faith in Jesus Christ brings in its train a relationship with God, a family on earth, and a place in history. These are the three big things that we're going to say in the light of these verses. We're going to hopefully discover them in the verses, but I throw them out at the beginning. These three great benefits that come as we trust in Jesus Christ, a relationship with God, a family on earth, and a place in history.

Let's discover these things together as we tiptoe through the verses before us. But before we do, identify and consider these benefits, we do have to, even if only very fleetingly and briefly, we do have to explain what faith in Jesus Christ involves. What does it mean to have faith in Christ?

You see, if we go straight in and say, well, these are the benefits, and yet you are uncertain or unsure as to what faith in Jesus Christ is, then we would have left a big gap that needs filled.

[3 : 28] So very briefly, let me just touch on this. What does it mean to have faith in Christ? Then in verse 26 of our passage, you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Very well, what is this faith in Christ Jesus? We could say that it involves three elements. First of all, faith in Christ Jesus involves a recognition that we are sinners, that we are disobedient, and that we need to be forgiven, that we need forgiveness. There are sins that we are guilty of that need to be forgiven.

The Bible is very clear on this reality. It states very clearly and unambiguously that all have sinned, all of us, you and me, all without exception, all have sinned. The Bible makes it clear that sin is serious. Not all are persuaded that that is so, but the Bible's testimony is clear. Sin is a serious matter. Sin or disobedience stands as a barrier between us and a right relationship with God.

So we need to recognize this as our reality. To have faith in Jesus Christ involves, first of all, this recognition of who we are and what our condition is. But of course, it must also involve an understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what He has done. The Bible identifies Jesus as the Son of God who was sent by God, who was sent by God the Father on a rescue mission to save sinners, to rescue those that are lost. And Jesus has done this by dealing with the sin problem. He has dealt with the sin problem by Himself living a sinless life and taking upon Himself the punishment that is due for our sin, for my sin, for your sin, by dying in our place. He has paid the price of our sin, to use language that the Bible also uses. So faith in Jesus Christ involves recognizing who we are, our condition, our need, recognizing that in Jesus Christ we have one who can meet that need, who can forgive our sin, who can save us. But faith in Christ requires a further crucial element, and that is the conscious act of trusting in Jesus Christ as our own Savior. It's not enough to recognize that you are a sinner, important though that is. It's not enough to understand that Jesus Christ is the Savior, important and necessary though that is. You must trust in this Jesus as your Savior.

The Bible speaks of the need to repent, to turn away from your sin, and turn to trust in Jesus as your Savior. And so before we proceed to think about the benefits that come with this faith in Jesus Christ, with trusting in Jesus, I ask the question again, do you have faith in Jesus Christ? Are you trusting in Jesus as your Lord and Savior? Sometimes I think people have difficulty with answering that question when it's maybe posed in terms of when did you put your trust in Jesus.

For some that's not a difficulty. It's possible to identify perhaps very clearly a point in your life when you understood these things to be true, and you consciously and deliberately deposited your faith in Jesus as your Savior, and you have no difficulty in saying that happened on this occasion, at this moment in my life. For others that's more difficult, to the point of maybe being unsure as to whether they are or are not Christians. Maybe those who were brought up in a Christian home, and they have difficulty identifying the day or the moment. And perhaps for you, a more helpful question. Certainly it was very helpful for me to have the question posed in this way. Rather than when did you put your trust in Jesus, maybe the key question is this, are you trusting in Jesus?

[7 : 39] Are you trusting in Jesus this morning? Can you say this morning, Jesus is my Lord, is my Savior? And if you can say, yes, He is, then it really doesn't matter too much if you can identify the moment when you were first able to declare this to be true of you. Are you trusting in Jesus? Do you today have faith in Christ Jesus? If you do, then enjoy the ride as you are reminded of the benefits that such faith brings.

But if you do not have faith in Jesus Christ, then discover how you are missing out big time and think again.

So, the benefits of faith in Jesus Christ. The first benefit we suggested is a relationship with God. Then in verse 26 of the passage that we're considering, you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

A relationship with God. What relationship? Well, we are sons and daughters of God. Paul assures his readers there in Galatia that they are all sons of God. You are all sons of God. And how has this come about? How is it so that he can address them in this way? You are all sons of God. Well, he tells us through faith in Christ Jesus. That is how it has come about that you are sons of God. That is why I can address you as sons of God because of your faith in Christ Jesus. John says something very similar in a very familiar verse. In the first chapter of John and verse 12 we read, Yet all who received him, that is all who received Jesus, to those who believed in his name, in the name of Jesus, he gave the right to become children of God, to become children of God, to become that which they were not, to become that which we were not. We were not children. We became children by faith in Jesus Christ. This is the first benefit identified in these verses, and it's a huge benefit.

Those who have faith in Jesus Christ are adopted into God's family. The creator of the universe, the God of all power and majesty and glory becomes our heavenly Father. And as sons, we enjoy the rights and privileges of family members. We can approach God in prayer, and we are assured of his audience, and of his concern, and of his willingness to help. We are assured of his fatherly love and care for us in any and every circumstance. As we were thinking with the children, we can be assured that nobody can snatch us from his hand because we are part of his family and want sons, always sons. We will never cease to be sons. Once we have become sons. Our place in the family is secure. It's rock solid, regardless of what we might think, regardless of what our own feelings about it might be. Once we're in the family, we remain in the family. We are granted by faith in Jesus Christ this great benefit, a relationship with God. This is what happens when we believe in Jesus. We are, to use the language of John, given the right to become children of God. Now, the question could be posed, how can that be, or how does that work? It's stated, Paul here in Galatians states it, you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, and at one level we might say, well, that's the way it is. It's not for us to delve into the whys and the wherefores, and how does that come about, or how does that work? It's simply, that's the way it is.

[11 : 39] You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. But we're not left in the dark on this matter as to how we are granted this new identity. How is it that faith in Jesus Christ grants us this relationship with God makes us sons of God? We're given insight into how this works, on why it is.

Paul gives us a huge clue, if not the answer, in what he goes on to say in verse 27. Notice what he goes on to say, you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourself with Christ. You see, in this verse, he tells us that faith in Christ results in us being clothed with Christ, or united to Christ. He makes reference to baptism. Why does he do that? Well, baptism was a visible declaration of faith in Christ, and served as a symbolic representation of union with Christ. Now, let's be very clear. The physical act of baptism did not, and does not, secure union with Christ, but it did, and it does, symbolize this new reality, or this new identity of being united to Christ, of being clothed by Christ. Now, what I'm trying to get, to is to then pose the question, what has this to do with sonship, and our understanding of how it is that we become sons of God when we trust in Jesus Christ? Well, it has a very great deal to do with it.

You see, by trusting in Jesus, we are united to Jesus, who is Himself the one and only Son of God, the only begotten. And it is that union with the Son, that being clothed with Jesus, that grants us sonship. The Father sees us united to Jesus. The Father sees us clothed with the Son, and so He treats us as the Son. Indeed, we become sons in that union with Jesus Christ. Apart from union with Christ, it would be impossible for the Father to consider us sons or to treat us as sons. It is as we are united to Christ by faith in Christ that we are clothed with Him, and that union with the Son makes us, in turn, sons of God. Now, this matter of being clothed with Christ by faith in Christ not only sheds light on the matter of our sonship, this first great benefit of faith in Christ, that we have a relationship with

God, we are sons of God. It is also the key to understanding the other benefits that we noted at the beginning, and that now we want to go on to consider. The second benefit, a family on earth, and the third benefit, a place in history. These two benefits are also connected to this great truth, that as we put our faith in Christ, we are united to Him and clothed by Christ. So, let's think of the second benefit. Not only does faith in Christ bring us a relationship with God, we are sons of God, but it also grants us a family on earth. Notice what Paul goes on to say there in verse 28, that it is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Having explained that we are clothed with Christ through faith in Christ, the apostle immediately proceeds to present this further resulting benefit. You are all one in Christ Jesus. And it is in Paul's argument of therefore that is implicit. You are clothed with Christ Jesus, therefore you are one in Christ Jesus. What Paul is saying is that if you are clothed in Christ, if you are united to Christ, then you are united to all who share this faith in Christ. You are all the same. No one is greater, and no one is lesser. The ground of your unity is union with Christ. Now, while there is a sense in which each individual Christian is personally clothed with Christ, it is also legitimate and indeed necessary to stand back and appreciate what we could call the big picture. And the big picture is that every believer, as Paul stresses in the examples he gives, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free, men and women, every believer united to the same Christ Jesus, united and regally clothed by the Son of God as He envelops us all in a saving embrace. Not just each of us clothed in Christ in our own wee world. Well, isn't it wonderful to be a Christian clothed in His righteousness? I'm right with God. I'm a Son of God.

[17:15] But no, united to Christ, Christ envelops the whole. Jews and Greeks, men and women, slaves and free, all united to Him, embraced by Him, clothed by Him. If you can maybe think of this visually, the picture that Paul paints or the examples that he gives stresses how in the world there are so many divisions. Everybody going his own way. Jews and Greeks, they won't speak to each other. Slaves and free, well, they're just in totally different social classes. They don't mix men and women. Also, certainly in the context of the culture that he was in, separated in so many ways, each going their own way, doing their own thing in their own little cliques, in their own little worlds.

But then you have this figure of Jesus Christ. He comes onto the scene of history, and as each of these, a Jew here, a Greek there, a man here, a woman here, a slave, a free man, they put their trust in Jesus. They're all over the place, but they come to this common point. They come together and are united to this one Jesus Christ. From all the corners of the world, from all the different circumstances, this is the point of contact. This is the point of union, the person of Jesus Christ.

And by faith in Christ, they are united to Him. They are clothed by Him. And so, they become one with one another. And so, Paul is able to say, you are all one in Christ Jesus. Indeed, the language Paul uses could be reasonably and legitimately translated. Literally, you are all one person in Christ Jesus.

Not just united, but one. And you see, there is a distinction there. It's not just that we're united. I could say, well, I support Aberdeen, and you support Aberdeen, so we're united in our support of Aberdeen. I use Aberdeen just because it's diplomatic rather than telling the truth and alienating many of you. See, at one level, yes, there's a certain unity. We're united, but we're not one. But you see, in the gospel and in the church of Jesus Christ, it's not just that we're united. We are one. You are all one person in Christ Jesus, because we are all connected by our connection with Him, by our union with Him, by our being clothed with Him. There is one Christ Jesus, and all who have faith in this one Christ Jesus are united to Him, are clothed by Him, and so by necessary consequence, part of that one person that is Jesus Christ. And this reality exposes the utter folly of any attempt to divide the church or introduce hierarchies of one kind or another, as was the problem here in Galatia. All such divisions, be they on ethnic or social or gender grounds, are rendered redundant in the light of all believers being clothed with Christ and united to

Him. We are in Christ one big family, and all are equal, equally united, equally clothed, equally loved, equally valued, equally saved. And this is the great second benefit that Paul highlights here in these verses of faith in Christ. We have a new family in earth. We have a new relationship with God. By faith in Jesus Christ, we are sons of God. But we also have this new family on earth, all one in Christ Jesus.

[21 : 01] But I mentioned a third benefit that Paul speaks of in these verses, that accrues with or comes from a faith in Jesus Christ. And the way I've described it is a place in history. Let me explain what I mean by that because I don't think it's immediately obvious. In verse 29, Paul goes on to say, if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.

Paul states that all the believers to whom he is addressing this letter in Galatia, they are the same people that he has said, you are all sons of God. And now he says to these same people, you are Abraham's seed. Jews and Gentiles, all described in this way as Abraham's seed.

Now, what is the significance of this designation? Well, some 2,000 years before Paul wrote this letter to the believers in Galatia, God had entered into a covenant with this man Abraham, in which he committed himself to Abraham and to his seed, to his descendants, to be his God, to be Abraham's God, to be their God.

Indeed, all who would be part of God's family would need to be part of Abraham's family. God's family was Abraham's family. And one could be inserted into this family by faith, but he had to be part of this family to be in this relationship with God.

This was the family God chose to love in a special way and through whom he would fulfill his purposes to bless the nations of the world. To be a child of Abraham then was to be a child of God.

[22 : 50] And Paul assures the Galatians that they are all Jews and Gentiles, descendants of Abraham. Abraham's seed. They have this place in history that allows them to trace their descent to Father Abraham.

So some Gentile slave deemed of no consequence in that society, yet he could say, well, I am a son of Abraham. I can trace my descent to Father Abraham. He is my father. I'm part of this big picture. I have this place in history. But the question is, that it's our concern, how is this a consequence of being united to Christ or clothed with Christ? How is being Abraham's seed a consequence of this truth, that we are clothed with Christ by faith in Christ? Well, in this covenant that God established with Abraham, he promised that from Abraham's seed there would come one who would bring blessing and salvation to the nations. And in the fullness of time, this son of Abraham, and yet one greater than Abraham, did come. He did appear on the stage of history, this man Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham, and yet greater than Abraham, the promised seed of Abraham. He came as the seed of Abraham. And so Paul is able to say to those who have faith in this Jesus Christ, in this seed of Abraham. He is able to say to them, and the argument goes along these lines somewhat, if you belong to Jesus, if you are united to Jesus, if you are clothed with Jesus, you are united to the seed of Abraham. And so you too, in union with Christ, our Abraham's seed, you have a place in history. You are part of God's big story. You're not here by accident. Your life isn't meaningless. It's not that you're here for a moment and then you pass away, soon forgotten. No, you have a place in history through faith in Jesus Christ.

So these wondrous benefits of faith in Jesus Christ are identified and presented to us here by the apostle. A relationship with God. We are sons of God, a family on earth, one in Christ Jesus, a place in history, the seed of Abraham, all benefits that come through faith in Christ Jesus.

Together. Together. We think of these benefits together, not just individually, but as we think of them together, they serve to bring a poor sinner home to where God intends us to be, in the very center of the universe. Maybe you can visualize it this way. Visualize yourself united to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ who is at the center of the universe, indeed over the universe. You are united to Him. He is embracing you. You are clothed by Christ. Just visualize yourself in that place. And then you can see that as you are united to Him, you have this relationship with God. You become a son of God as you are united to Him. This relationship, vertical if you wish, God on high is your Father because you're united to Christ. He is embracing you. But in that same place where He embraces you, you enjoy this relationship and this family that you are part of with all others who are equally embraced by Jesus

Christ. And as you are embraced by Christ, the seed of Abraham, there you are in the center of history looking back to your father Abraham and all who followed in his train. Indeed, looking forward to all who will follow you in putting their trust in Jesus Christ, you see how it is there at the very heart, at the very center of where you're meant to be, only in so much as you are united to Christ and clothed by Christ. And how does this come about? When you put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. And so I say, put your faith in Jesus Christ. Don't wonder aimlessly in this world your life isn't meaningless.

[27 : 25] There is a great purpose for you, but only in so much as you are united to Jesus, apart from Jesus, you are nothing and can do nothing. Put your trust in Jesus that He would embrace you and in His embrace enjoy these wondrous benefits that are there for you. If you would but believe, if you would but put your faith in Jesus Christ, if you would but recognize your need of a Savior and see in Him a sufficient Savior and trust in Him, put your trust in Him and enjoy all that comes from putting your trust in Him. What are you waiting for? Come home to Jesus is my invitation to you this morning. Let us pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.