

GALATIANS - SERMON 15
GALATIANS 3:27-29 – CONTRAST OF OLD & NEW COVENANTS
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INTRODUCTION:

Read Galatians 3:23-29

*23 But before **new covenant** came, we were kept under guard by the **old covenant**, kept for the **new covenant** which would afterward be revealed. 24 Therefore the **old covenant** was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after the **new covenant** has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 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.*

In this passage the term *the faith* is a reference to the new covenant and the term *law* is a reference to the old covenant. Under the old covenant the people of God were under guard as those in their immaturity. With the advent and introduction of the new covenant the people of God moved from infancy to adulthood (maturity). The word translated *children* in verse 26 is actually υιοὶ or sons of God. That word *son* is to be held in contrast with the word in Galatians 4:1 (νήπιός - *child*.) The people of God moved from one state to another as they moved from one covenant to another. There was a transformation within the community of God's people relative to this change in covenantal relationship. First of all there is the ordinance of inclusion in verse 27 where those who are baptized into Christ and have put on Christ. Then we see the previous categorical distinction have been erased (verse 28 - neither Jew nor Greek...). And then a new principle of relational generation is established (verse 29 - heirs of Abraham through Christ).

Understanding these transformations is essential to a proper doctrine of baptism, the church, and God's Israel.

OUTLINE:

- I THE ORDINANCE OF INCLUSION INTO THE COVENANT COMMUNITY HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED, VS 27.
- II THE PREVIOUS CATEGORICAL DISTINCTIONS HAVE BEEN REMOVED, VS 28.
- III A NEW PRINCIPLE OF RELATIONAL GENERATION HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED, VS 29.

- I THE ORDINANCE OF INCLUSION INTO THE COVENANT COMMUNITY HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED, VS 27.
Under the Abrahamic covenant and the old covenant the ordinance of inclusion into the covenant community was circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14). Without that ordinance of inclusion that man was to be cut off from the community.

Genesis 17:14

"And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

Circumcision has been done away with as an ordinance of inclusion into the covenant community by the new covenant. It has been rendered meaningless or as a matter of indifference (for example Galatians 2:3, 5:6, 6:15 & 1 Corinthians 7:19).

Under the new covenant a new sign of inclusion has been instituted. That ordinance is water baptism. Circumcision is gone and baptism is in. The pattern in the New Testament is clear and repetitive.

Acts 2:41

Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them.

As the old covenant community knew nothing of uncircumcised members so also the new covenant knows nothing of unbaptized members.

Matthew 28:19

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

What we see in the New Testament is that every case of baptism was disciple baptism and every disciple was baptized. Baptism is to be applied only to those who are saved as made clear by verse 27.

Galatians 3:27

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

1 To be *baptized into Christ* means to have received the ordinance of baptism.

Acts 19:1-5

And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit." And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism." Then Paul said, "John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Acts 2:38

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 8:16

For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Romans 6:3

Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

(also Matthew 28:19)

- 2 Who was it that was to receive this ordinance of inclusion - baptism?

Galatians 3:27

For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

The proper recipients of the ordinance of baptism are only those who *have put on Christ*.

To *put on Christ* means to have the righteousness of Christ as our garment. It means to be saved.

Revelation 19:7-8

"Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

This idea of the righteousness of Christ as a garment is consistent with Isaiah 64 condemnation of our righteousness as filthy rags.

Isaiah 61:10

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

To put on Christ is equivalent to putting on salvation. Hence the significance of believers baptism, *for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*. The ones who have done the one thing have already done the other thing. These two things go together, putting on Christ and being baptized. They are to be adjacent to one another.

Notice that Paul has written this epistle to the churches of Galatia. He writes to a number of churches. In spite of the probable fact that these several churches would have had among them children and infants as well as all ages, yet he assumes that those baptized had been clothed in the righteousness of Christ (saved). Could Paul have made that same statement if infants had been baptized in those places (*as many as*)? The only way to include infants is to assume that water baptism imparts righteousness.

Infants cannot supply suitable evidence of Christ's righteousness and hence they are not suitable candidates for baptism. Before a candidate is baptized the question must be asked - are they robed in Christ's righteousness?

Under the new covenant the ordinance of inclusion has undergone a transformation of nature and of objects. Formerly it was circumcision, now it is baptism. Formerly it

was put upon all the physical seed of the race of Abraham, now it is for only the spiritual children.

II THE PREVIOUS CATEGORICAL DISTINCTIONS HAVE BEEN REMOVED, 28.

Galatians 3:28

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.

Under the old covenant there was a clear distinction made between Jewish descent and Gentile descent (*Greek* is stated as a metonymy - the part for the whole). Within the old covenant there were precepts designed to perpetrate and protect such distinctions. The old covenant kept certain people separated from the community or from parts of it. There was a distinction between bond and free. There was also a stricter distinction between male and female (only the male took the sign of the covenant). Men could enter the Tabernacle court where the sacrifices were offered, but the women had to remain outside.

Paul's point is that under the new covenant national, social, and sexual distinctions have been erased as to acceptance and standing before God. All have access to God under the new covenant. The only prohibiting distinction is that of having put on Christ, *for you are all one in Christ Jesus*. This is more of a declaration of equality rather than an affirmation of unity.

There is no hierarchy in the new covenant of the kind under the old covenant. Paul is NOT saying that national, social, and sexual distinctions do not exist. They still exist. Paul is stating that such distinctions exert no influence upon our relationship with one another or with God. In the new covenant there are no inferior or superior members. The Judaizers did not agree and this was part of the error into which Peter fell (Galatians 2:11-12), maintaining wrong distinctions.

Under the new covenant, black & white, old & young, married & single, rich & poor, and male & female all have one standing under Christ if they have put on Christ. Our fellowship must not be restricted. The only distinction we are to maintain is that between the lost and the saved. (James 2:1-9).

There are specific roles and ministries that are maintained throughout the new covenant, but the individual standing of any believer before is not based upon national, social, or sexual content.

III A new principle of relational generation has been established, v 29.

Galatians 3:29

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

That which usually defines our relations is our bloodline or family heritage. Our relations are determined by our natural birth. Under the new covenant a new principle of relationship is instituted. Under the old covenant, in order to be related to Abraham one

had to be a physical descendant of him. If you were to enjoy the promises made to Abraham then you had to be an offspring of his children.

Now, under the new covenant relationship to Abraham and thus participation in his blessings requires neither blood descent nor circumcision. One can now become a child of Abraham and thus an inheritor of his blessings by faith and trust in Jesus Christ. The line of descent from Abraham is reckoned now, not of blood or circumcision, but by faith; not by physical descent but by spiritual descent (not by circumcision of flesh, but that of the heart).

From Abraham to Christ the descent was by physical birth and circumcision. From Christ the principle of physical descent was entirely broken off and the line is by spiritual descent. Jesus Christ begot children through the new birth. Paul begot the Corinthians by spiritual birth not physical. The covenant community is now defined by spiritual descent rather than physical descent. These are now reckoned to be the true children of Abraham.

Galatians 3:7

Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham.

Faith, not blood is the principle of relationship. This is the reason why the Gentiles can be included in the new covenant and in relationship with God.

Hebrews 8:8-10

Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Notice that the promise of the new covenant is made with the houses of Israel and Judah. Since we are not of those two houses, how is it that we are included in the new covenant? The answer is that we have become Israelites and Jews as descendants of Abraham through the vehicle of the new birth by faith in Jesus Christ. This is what Galatians 3:29 is saying. If you have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ then you are sons of Abraham. This is the basis for the statement that the church is the new Israel.

Conclusion:

This is a summary of the radical transformations that have occurred from the old covenant to the new covenant. The ordinance of inclusion has changed in nature and in object. The former categorical distinctions have been erased with regard to acceptance before God. And the previous relational generations have been changed to spiritual relation from physical.

The equitable understanding of these things forms the basis of sound doctrine regarding baptism, Israel, and that of the church.

Hymn # 278