

## **We Are One In Christ Jesus**

Good morning! I know that I already officially thanked you and welcomed you earlier, but I want you to know that we truly mean that. We're so thankful for our church family who spend their week serving in their communities and loving as Christ loves. I'm so thankful that God has brought those of you who are visiting to gather and worship with us through prayer and song and study of God's Holy Word. I hope you've all had a great week. I can't believe that spring sprung and now the snow falls. If we were anywhere but Cincinnati I'd say unbelievable. However, it's really not. My birthday is April 3rd and I can tell you several birthdays throughout my lifetime have been with snow on the ground. I know that we had to cancel our service Saturday yesterday so our door hangers haven't been hung but we will get those out next Saturday during our second church work day. I hope everyone will plan on attending from 9:00-noon. Some of us will stay at the church and plant flowers and clean up our grounds, everyone else will go and hang our door hangers.

If you have your Bible with you, and I hope you do, will you go ahead and grab them and turn to **Galatians chapter 3**. We will be covering **Galatians 3:23 through 4:7** today. As you are finding your place I want to take a few moments to recap where we've been.

Think of the very beginning of what we've been studying in Galatians up to this point. We've been in **Galatians 9** weeks today. One statement that really sums it all up: **We are saved by grace alone (sola gratia) through faith alone (sola fide) in Christ alone.** That statement sums up everything we've seen in Galatians. **We're saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.**

Grace alone we saw in **Galatians 1**. Remember the truth we saw there; God's pleasure in you is not based on your performance for Him. This is huge. God's pleasure in us is not based on our performance for Him. It's by grace alone.

We saw in **Galatians 2**, that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone. **Instead of God's pleasure in us being based on our performance before Him, God's**

pleasure **in us** is based on whose performance? **Christ's performance for us and in us.** This is the beauty of faith; that we trust in Christ. We've been crucified with Christ; we no longer live, but Christ lives in us. The life we live, we live by what? Faith, **Galatians 2:20**. Faith in the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

So, we avoid **legalism** in **Galatians 1**, thinking that we can perform for God.

We avoid **hypocrisy** in **Galatians 2**. Living lives that are out of step with the truth of the gospel, and **Galatians 1 and 2 come together in Galatians 3 in Christ alone.** We looked last week at 2,000 years of history; Old Testament history from Abraham to Moses to Christ and how Christ fulfilled the law of Moses and completed the promise to Abraham and everything, **not just biblical history, but all of history revolves around Christ. He is supreme.** He is supreme as our righteousness and our joy and our hope and our strength and our life. He is everything to us at every moment. He is our life; He's our everything. So, that's what we've seen up to this point...salvation in Galatians.

Now that we're caught up on where we've been, let's look at our text for today. **Galatians 3:23-4:7** reads, **"23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 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 no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.**

**4 1 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. 3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6**

*And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."*

### **May God bless the reading of His Word.**

In April I will be 45 years old. I have been a believer since I was 15. I have been a member of or a part of 10 churches in my life as a believer as both a member and a pastor. That means for 30 years I've been about as involved as I can be as a believer and a staff member and only once in all of that time have I heard about National Adoption Month and only once has a pastoral staff emphasized the importance of being a church that is known for loving the fatherless. Last year, while I rested and God healed me and pulled my family together Micki and I attended Missio Dei church near Clifton. In November Pastor Kurt Hannah led us through Orphan Sunday. That Sunday one of the lay leaders spoke on the adoption process. He and his wife were in the process of adopting their third child from overseas. Adoption is lengthy. It is expensive. It is emotional. It is worth it. Missio Dei made it a point of emphasis to financially support families who foster and adopt because they believe that it is not only a worthwhile cause, but because it is Biblical.

It's my hope, as your pastor, to begin the conversation with our church about being a church that supports families who foster and adopt. As we study this passage today, please have that in mind.

Maybe you are here today and you have fostered or adopted.

Maybe you are here today and you were fostered or adopted.

Maybe you are here today and God is moving in you and opening your eyes to what it would mean to foster or adopt.

I want to stand beside you and support you. I want there to be no barriers to what God is leading.

Let's look closely at our passage. Look at **Galatians 3:23-24**, it reads "**23** *Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming*

*faith would be revealed. 24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith."*

Paul begins our passage today by personifying the Law. In the 1990's before Mel Gibson directed *The Passion of the Christ* he starred in a movie called *Ransom*. The plot of the movie revolved around a man (Mel Gibson) who owned an airline. His employees had just ended a strike with the union and his son was kidnaped and held for a ransom. The thought was that this was someone from the union who had kidnaped his son as a way of getting back at him because they didn't get what they wanted. Without giving away too much, Gibson refused to pay the ransom believing that if he did the kidnappers would kill his son. He placed the amount of the ransom demand on the heads of those who had kidnapped his son saying that if anyone located his son and killed the kidnappers he would pay them the amount of the ransom.

The thing about a ransom is the one holding the hostage usually gets to set the terms and the amount to be paid to recover the one held. Many people mistakenly believe that satan set the ransom for us and Christ paid Him as he purchased us out of sin. **The truth is God the Father set the amount due when He gave us the Law to diagnose our sin. The penalty of our sin is death.**

We looked at that a couple of weeks ago when we read **Romans 6:23** which reads, *"For the wages of sin is death"*.

**Ephesians 9:22** reads, *"Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."*

God Himself set the **penalty** for our sin as death and only Christ Himself was able to **pay** it.

Christ delivered us from the wrath of God so that we would be justified in faith. In **Mark 10**, James and John came to Jesus with what they think is a reasonable request. They want Jesus to sit each of them at the right and left of Him in His Kingdom. Through the process of telling them that they have no clue what they are asking Jesus points out to them that He Himself didn't come to serve but to serve and **give his life as a ransom for many.** (v.45)

Please hear me for a moment.

Can you imagine with me for a moment being kidnaped?

Can you imagine being held hostage or against your will.

Can you imagine knowing that your life hangs in the balance of what someone else will do for you to purchase you out of this situation?

This was a very real thing for people living in the time of Jesus. They were slaves who desperately wanted to be set free but someone had to pay the cost of their freedom.

Now imagine if someone offered that type of payment. Would you refuse or would you gratefully fall at the feet of the one who paid and be forever thankful.

If you are here and you have never received the ransom of Jesus Christ for your sins, what are you waiting for? **I want you to know that he loves you so much that there is NOTHING that you can do to stop Him from that payment and once your sins are paid they are paid in full.** All that you've ever done, all that you'll ever do will be wiped clean and you will be justified or made just if I'd never sinned at all before God the Father. **It's my hope and prayer that God will call you today and you will repent and accept this payment for your sins.**

Let's keep going **Galatians 3:25-26**, it reads "**25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.**"

But now . . . But now . . . you gotta know, I love the buts in the Bible. Careful. You're in church. Not but-t it's B-U-T. Remember a couple of weeks ago when I almost went Pentecostal well, maybe Bapticostal up here reading from **Ephesians 2**? There was a **HUGE but God** in that passage. It reads, "**And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God**, being rich in mercy,

*because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— 6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*

Do you hear what I’m saying? Can you feel the power given to the powerless here. Let me spell it out for you.

You’re a mess! I’m a mess.

We are as messed up and broken as we can be.

We choose to satisfy our lusts, our desires, our hopes and our dreams.

We care about making ourselves God and because of that we are under the wrath of God given to us through the Law.

All of us are held captive under it with a ransom note attached saying that payment in full is necessary and only the blood of a sinless lamb will be accepted.

**But God, being rich in mercy. But now, faith has come and we are no longer under a guardian.** We are free! WE ARE FREE.

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters in Christ, **WHY DO YOU AND I CONTINUE TO LIVE AS SLAVES WHEN WE ARE FREE?**

**John 8:36** tells us, “*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*” Stop living as slaves to sin, stop giving in to your natural lusts. **Romans 6:22** tells us, “*But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.*”

Do you know why our fruit leads us to sanctification and its end is eternal life? Because “*in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*” (**v.26**). We are no longer strangers and slaves, we are family! You and I have been adopted as sons

and daughters into the family of God. **Romans 8:17** says, "*and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*"

Praise God for providing Christ Jesus as my ransom so that I can be called His son. I am not worthy of the ransom **but God** saw me in my helpless state and had mercy on me. He sees you too and has mercy for you. Won't you reach out to Him today and accept this ransom?

Look at **Galatians 3:27** with me. It reads, "*27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*"

Some will read this as baptism is necessary for salvation to be completed. However, that's a lazy translation of the context of this passage. As we read this passage we see the emphasis is on losing our identity in Jesus Christ. He ransoms us and now as we read **verse 27** we read that as many of you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

The word baptise literally means to immerse. It's why we immerse you in water when we baptise you. We are signifying that you were alive, you died to your sins and you are raised up a new creation in Christ. What Paul is telling the believers in Galatia is you, yourself, have been lost in or immersed in Christ. That's why he told them in **Galatians 2:20**, "*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*"

When you and I are lost in Christ, our identity begins to look like Him. Not because we are trying to present ourselves as holy but because **Christ is holy and He is making us more like Himself everyday, that's sanctification!**

Let's finish up **chapter 3** by reading **verses 28-29**, they read "*28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*"

As Christians we are to be counter cultural. Paul's statement here is as radical and counter cultural as anything that he has ever said. In one verse Paul completely

levels all playing fields. He addresses slavery, gender equality and breaks the racism barrier in one small verse and then in the next verse he pulls us all together in the fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham.

**How do you live counter culturally? Let me push you for a few minutes.** I want to move you from your comfortable pews, in your comfortable suburban lifestyle, and ask you to look at the world beyond what our culture says. **I want to know, how you live your life as a witness to the culture rather than a witness of the culture.** I'm guilty. I admit it. It's easy to buy into the culture.

Our country is so polarized that it's easy to get caught up in defining ourselves as conservative or liberal. It's so easy to demonize those with opposing viewpoints. It's easy to ride the wave of hating rather than living counter to that culture and sharing the love of Christ as we are called to do. Maybe you aren't as bad as I am. Maybe you have never gone to websites to leave opinions that are mean to troll others. Maybe you have it more together but you say nothing at all. You keep your thoughts to yourself. **Is that counter cultural?**

Paul was bold. He said things that were true regardless of what his culture said. The judaizers were teaching a belief that Paul himself was raised on, and he bought in to so much that he set out to wipe Christianity off the face of the earth.

Then he became a new creation in Christ and the old passed away and he was immersed in or put on Christ. He was beyond the things he had been taught and he was willing to give his life to defend his faith. **Being counter cultural isn't always being in others faces, but it is always being willing to stand up for what God stands up for.** We are all equally broken. We are all equally lost. None of us will ever get it right, no matter how much we try.

It doesn't matter if you are a woman, or a man.

It doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Greek.

It doesn't matter if you are a slave living in an oppressed nation or you live in a free country.

There is no hope apart from Christ.

Let's move on to **chapter 4** by looking at **verses 1-2**. **Galatians 4:1-** reads, "**1 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.**"

As we begin our journey through **chapter 4** we will see that Paul really emphasized that **God sent His Son so that we might receive the position of sons.** Last week I shared with you how important it is for a good preacher or teacher to relate real world examples to Biblical principles. Paul is using a real world example of a child who is under the care of his parents until he reaches the age of adulthood. In **verse 1** Paul is saying that **although a child may be an heir, he is no different than a slave when he is a child, even though he owns everything because his father is still in charge of him.**

You and I and everyone else became a rebellious teenager at one point. Do you know what made us rebellious? We were rebellious because we were under the charge of our parents and we wanted to out from under that charge to do our own thing. When we did we rebelled against our parents and they had the authority to discipline us and bring us back into alignment with how they wanted us to live. In a sense we were as slaves at that point until one day when we received the fullness of our inheritance. Paul is bridging the real world to the spiritual world.

I started my sermon today talking about adoption because I knew where we would end. **Unfortunately, adoption isn't as simple as it should be.** There are a lot of things that need to take place to make an adoption happen and they need to happen in a certain order.

Let's keep going by reading **Galatians 4:3-7**, it reads "**3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.**"

What we see in this passage is the process of the adoption. In order for adoption to take place First, adoption requires someone that **comes** at the right **time**. Paul writes in **verses 4-5**, "*But **when the fullness of time had come**, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law , to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.*"

Next week we will take a week away from Galatians to dive deeply into the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. It's Easter so what did you expect? Anyway, what you will see is that in the fullness of time God sent His Son to die for the sins of the many. It was the right time. **There will come a time in your life where it will be the right time to surrender. It's my prayer that even as we examine His Word that you will begin to feel that call and that today will be that time.**

The **second thing** that is required for adoption is someone to come who possesses the right **qualifications**. **Hebrews 1:3** tells us that, "*He (Jesus) is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*" **Jesus has all of the qualifications to redeem us by paying our ransom.** When we want to adopt children, we must have the proper qualifications. That means we must go through the classes and have a judge acknowledge that we are prepared to care for that child regardless of his or her circumstances. When Christ came to rescue us, he came as the only one who is fully qualified to care for us, regardless of our circumstances so that we might be adopted as sons and daughters.

So we've discovered that adoption requires someone with the right time, and with the right qualifications, and **finally thirdly**, adoption requires someone who has the right **resolve**.

**Ephesians 1:3-6** reads, "**3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, **4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. **In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ**, according to the purpose of his will, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved."

We were predestined for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ **according to the purpose of His will.** That was the resolve of God to send His Son to claim us as His own through the sacrifice of Jesus. His resolve was never in question. He is able to see it to the end and now He is seated at the right hand of the Father.

From 2000-2005 I worked at Clermont County Children's Protective Services as an investigator. It was my role to investigate abuse and neglect and either substantiated or unsubstantiated it. If it was substantiated I prepared the case to go to ongoing case management. Only once in my five years there did I see a case to its conclusion. I was the intake investigator and I transferred the case to ongoing with the hope that the children's mother would get her life together and reunify with her children. Unfortunately after more than a year of trying she just couldn't do it. I had to go testify in court and the day that the mother's rights were terminated.

Her children were already placed in a foster to adopt home. After the mother's rights were terminated, the children's foster parents were given the go ahead by our agency to begin the adoption process. I was able to be present as the foster parents were in court before the judge asking for those children to be called their own. The judge asked both the adoptive father and mother a series of questions. I'll never forget what he said to them both prior to making it final. He looked at them and told them to look him in the eye. He said to them that if he agrees to make this final, these children are no longer foster children, they are their children. There is no undoing this thing. No matter what the financial costs, no matter what the emotional costs, no matter what they are their children. For better or worse, regardless of need they are theirs for life.

He asked them if they are sure they were ready and in tears of joy, they said yes your honor. He granted the adoption and those children were no longer alone, but they were part of a forever family.

**God has that resolve.** He sees you helpless, hopeless and broken. He looks at your imperfections and sees your sin and He alone has the resolve to love you without condition through it all for all of eternity. Once you are a part of His family, he will never lose you. Jesus said in **John 6:39**, "*And this is the will of him who*

*sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day."* Christ has the resolve and He will keep you forever.

Worship band should come to the stage.

Let's conclude our time by reading **Galatians 4:6-7**, "**6** *And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"* **7** *So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.*"

As sons and daughters we have the Holy Spirit indwelling with us. We have the privilege of calling God Abba or Daddy. **We are no longer on formal terms, we are on familiar terms.** Paul is giving the image of a child who is hurting and in need of help crying out to his daddy for help. That is who we are now that we are son and daughters.

In this room today we are all slaves. Everyone of us. Either we are a slave to the flesh or we are a slave to God.

If we try to quench the desires of our hearts by pouring ourselves into every desire we have we are slaves of the flesh.

If we find fulfillment only in Christ, we are slaves of the Father.

If we are slaves of the flesh, we are children of wrath and enemies of God.

If we are slaves of the Father then we are heirs who can cry out to our daddy in times of struggles and trouble.

We are going to begin our time of response. Andrew and the band have already begun to play quietly. I ask them to do this so that you can begin to quiet your hearts to hear as God is speaking. It's my belief that God is present and His Spirit is moving. Sometimes as He does this we get uncomfortable because we see areas of our life that are not what we know they should be. It's my hope that as God is moving you will respond by reaching out to Him in prayer and confess to Him where you know you are falling short and ask for forgiveness. It's my hope that if you have never begun a relationship with Him that you will cry out to Him for the very first time, Abba, Daddy! I promise you, if you cry out in faith, He will answer.

Maybe you are here today and you are a believer and you see clearly where you are living as a slave when you should be living as an heir. It's my hope that as the Holy Spirit moves you will repent as well and reach out to restore yourselves as sons and daughters rather than living in slavery to the flesh.

Maybe you just want to spend time in meditation thinking about where God is moving. Maybe you want to spend time singing along with the worship band as they lead us in a time of response.

We also want to open this time for those of you who are members or regular attenders to bring your tithes and offerings to the Lord. The plates are on the table at the front with the communion elements. I want to encourage you to take a moment to talk to your children or grandchildren if they are with you and explain to them what you are doing. Explain to them that God is the giver of all good gifts and that we give back a portion of all that He blesses us with to carry on the spread of the gospel.

We also open the communion table to anyone who is a member of the body of Christ regardless of where your membership is. Each week we take time corporately gather as a church and remember Christ's body which was broken for our sins and remember his blood that was shed for our sins.

Every week, as we prepare to take communion I like to read from **1 Corinthians 11:23-26** which reads, *"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'*"

*For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."*

Would you stand and pray with me as we begin this time of response?

Prayer