



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Sunday, June 19-25 (C) – Galatians 3:23-29

Focus: *No Longer Divided*

word of life

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:27-28 NRSV)

Read Galatians 3:23-29

The Apostle Paul’s training as a Pharisee gave him an extensive understanding of Jewish law. It was the law which provided a framework for daily life and religious practice. The law was not perceived as something negative, but the law in the Torah was a blessing to those who desired to live a righteous relationship with God. (See Psalm 1:1-3)

1. *When you hear the word “law”, what comes to mind?*
2. *What do you know about the Torah?*

When Paul encountered Christ, his understanding of the law was transformed. Paul’s letter to the Galatians includes his expanded understanding of the purpose of the law. “Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith.” (Galatians 3:23-24 NRSV)

Before Christ, the law was like a disciplinarian—a baby sitter, custodian, tutor, or a household staff who watches the children. The analogy of a disciplinarian is of a paid servant who watches over a child and keeps him or her out of trouble. The child needs protective custody for the child’s own good.

3. *How well did you follow the rules when you were a child?*
4. *How do you respond to people who enjoy breaking the rules (law)?*

“But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.” (Galatians 3:25-26 NRSV) Things change because of Christ Jesus. Children become heirs of God. A babysitter or disciplinarian is no longer needed because there is a change of heart—a heart which is open to Christ.

Baptism becomes the tangible sign of God’s grace made known in Christ Jesus. “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.” (Galatians 3:27 NRSV) The new clothing of Christ reflects the changed person, one who is heir of God’s promises and part of God’s family.

5. *What does it mean to be clothed with Christ?*
6. *How does behavior change when we embrace Christ and his teachings?*

No longer are there divisions based on race, social status, or gender. Our baptism brings us into a relationship with others which transcends boundaries. The key description about our identity is our singular connection to Christ. Our framework for daily life becomes Christ, not a list of laws which we may or may not choose to follow. We treat others and respect the laws of the land because of Christ. We put on Christ not because a disciplinarian has told us to do, but because we have been transformed by the love of God in Christ. We want to put on Christ and live accordingly. That makes the difference.

7. *How does our connection to Christ change the way we live?*

Word among us

Iris was hired to be a nanny and care for a two-year boy. Since Iris had two young brothers, she felt prepared for whatever was ahead of her. But within the first five minutes of meeting her charge, Iris knew it was going to be a challenge. No one mentioned in the interview that the child loved to bite—other people. He needed constant supervision. Otherwise this two-year-old was determined to find something to eat, throw, break, or bite!

1. *Have you ever had to supervise someone who was determined to get into trouble? Describe the situation.*
2. *How do you teach a child to have self-discipline?*

Paul describes the law as a disciplinarian—almost like a nanny or babysitter who watches over a child prone to get into trouble. Parents, teachers, and others who act as custodians over children hope and pray their children will mature to be responsible adults. Paul hinges everything on baptism and being clothed with Christ. Whereas the law hits someone on the shoulder to prompt right behavior and decisions, faith stirs an inner desire to live a life pleasing to God.

3. *Reflect on your own journey of faith. Describe a time when you began to worship, pray, or serve others not because you HAD to do so, but because you WANTED to do so.*

Through baptism, we become part of God’s family and heirs to the throne. It means our biological family is not our identifying mark, but rather the wet cross made on our forehead. Our family of Christ includes people of all backgrounds, race, and economic situations. “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28 NRSV)

4. *How does baptism change the way we view each other?*
5. *How does baptism change the way we view those outside the church?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God’s faithful people

When God made the covenant with Abraham, God promised Abraham descendants as many as the stars in heaven. We can trace the covenantal promise made to Abraham throughout the Old Testament. But Paul boldly proclaims a new relationship in Christ. “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:29 NRSV)

It can be said again and again—baptism changes things. In baptism, we are clothed with Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to practice faith in daily life. We do not live as perfect disciples, but ones who strive to live faithfully, guided by the Spirit. For God is not at work solely in my life, but in *our* lives. As we live among God’s faithful people, together we are heirs to the promises God established with Abraham.

6. *What does it mean for you to be one of Abraham’s offspring?*
7. *How will knowing these things make a difference in the upcoming week?*

Prayer

Loving Parent, clothe us with Christ, embrace us as your children and guide our way. Amen

last word

Be intentional about greeting others
as a brother and sister in Christ.

Daily Faith Practices

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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