

All One in Christ Jesus

Galatians 3

Brady bunch slide

Here's a story, about a lovely lady.

Who was bringing up three very lovely girls.

All of them had hair of gold, like their mother,
the youngest one in curls.

I'm quoting the first words of the theme song from the brady bunch. There they are on your screen.

The sad reality is that some of you will be able to sing the whole song and name every character. If you can, please don't. You can do it on the way home in the car.

For those who don't recognize the brady bunch.

The brady bunch is a 70's TV sitcom about two single parent families becoming one.

And whether it was the boys having to lose the dog because Jan's allergic, or the boys keeping the girls out of their new clubhouse. The point is. Blended families are hard work.

On the show it was all pretty sanitized. But if you've had first hand experience of a blended family you'll know the sort of things that come up. Two sets of histories.

Two sets of loyalties. And nowhere near as many happy endings as the Brady Bunch. It's painful stuff.

You know it's bad when the police would rather go to a bank robbery than a domestic.

And sometimes it's just as painful when it comes to the family we call church.

And this is something that started to become clear in chapter 2 from last week. And that is...that the coming of Jesus means now we're all ONE. We're one big family.

And in the first instance. That means bringing Jews and Gentiles together under one roof. And you've got thousands of years of history. Thousands of years of loyalties to deal with.

Christians that are Jews. Living under the laws of Moses since forever. And Christians that are Gentiles who all of a sudden are at the dinner table, they're in your pew at church. They're asking if they can marry your daughter!

And so it's no surprise that there's a bit of tension. Which is why you saw Peter last week slinking away from the Gentile table, separating himself. But Paul says he's not giving in. He's going to defend the truth of the gospel.

And the truth is...that God is one. And so is his family. I'll get you to turn to the end of the chapter and Paul's summary. We're at verse 26.

You are ALL SONS OF GOD through FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ,

There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are ALL ONE... in Christ Jesus.

Now that's where Paul's going with this, as he talks about Abraham and the holy Spirit and curses and covenants. So he can say.

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

In other words. Male or female, slave or free, jew or gentile. Welcome to the brady bunch family.

Where we're all one in Christ.

So lets just go back to the start of chapter 3 and we'll see if we can follow Paul's logic.

As Paul turns back the clock to when the Galatians first heard the news.

You foolish Galatians Paul says. Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified.

And you might have picked up this is more of an interrogation than an explanation. Verse 2.

And this reminds me a bit of my mum's tirades when I've done the wrong thing.

I would like to learn just one thing from you: did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish?

Now as you'll know if you've been on the end of one of these attacks. They're not for answering, they're making a point.

And for Christian Gentiles who've all of a sudden started following Jewish customs and Jewish food laws and Jewish ceremonies to somehow legitimize their faith. It's a pretty good point.

If God demonstrated he accepted you by giving you the Holy Spirit. And you can read about it in the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit came along fairly spectacularly in the beginning. People being healed and speaking in tongues and things. If God demonstrated HIS ACCEPTANCE....so obviously by giving you his Spirit WITHOUT doing any of those things. Totally apart from any law keeping....why the need now?

There's a tightrope walker called Charles Blondin in the 19th century. And he set up a tightrope over Niagara Falls. And he'd go back and forth. With a wheelbarrow. Blindfolded. But one day he asked for the ultimate test of faith. He by asking his manager to go over on his shoulders.

And you might say that's foolish. But imagine if he's there on Blondin's back. His manager. Imagine if he gets halfway...and says. I'll do the rest myself?

It'd be a death wish wouldn't it? And that's Paul's point.

After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?

It's foolish.

Have you suffered so much for nothing?

Answer this question. Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard?

And the answer's so obvious. It's a multiple choice answer with only two options. So for a million bucks. Lock in B. by faith.

Which is ok if you're one of those Johnny come lately Gentiles.

But Paul's not finished. Because verse 6 here's another picture of someone who's accepted by God the same way. And you might have heard of him. His name's Abraham.

⁶ Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness."

Abraham's name means father. And he's the father of the Jewish Nation. Even over and above Moses, Abraham the great patriarch, is the Jew's claim to rights before God. But notice the link and get the logic.

How was Abraham accepted by God? Did he roll up his sleeves and say. Right. Time to be righteous? Did he obey the commandments? Well no as a matter of fact. He didn't have any. They hadn't been given yet. No here's what he did. Verse 7 He believed God. Sound familiar? You wouldn't have spotted it, but Paul's pointing out the family resemblance. Never mind Moses he says. You Galatians, you non Jews are children of Abraham.

So, when it comes to the question of who's counted as part of the real family of Abraham, and the ONE FAMILY OF GOD, what's the family characteristic? It's not going to be your Jewish circumcision. It's not going to be the law. It's faith: understand then, says Paul in verse 7, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith - it's been there all the time - and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham - when God said to him, all nations will be blessed through you. Not just the Jews. All nations – by faith in Jesus. The one who was clearly portrayed to you.

So verse 9, those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

That's why it's foolish to play the law game. Because if you want to do that. You'll only find one thing.

And that is. Curse. Because the law just brings curse.

You might be able to do some of it. But you'll never be able to do all of it.

And the trouble is, that's what Deuteronomy 27 verse 26 says Israel will have to do. Not pick and choose. Do all of it.

Verse 10 - and Paul's quoting from Moses in Deuteronomy. "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do EVERYTHING written in the book of the law."

If you want to rely on doing the law, make sure you don't miss any. If you think keeping God's laws can make you righteous, think again. Because it never did. And it's not going to start now.

It's interesting. There's another quote from the Old Testament in verse 13.

Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.

And now we're talking about Jesus. Hung out on a tree to die. There's the proof of the curse of the law. As Jesus takes the curse in the place of the ones who deserved it. And at the same time the proof of the end of the law, and the start of the time of the spirit that goes to all nations.

Which again is why it's so foolish to go back to the curse of the law. And try to bring the nations try to bring the gentiles back under the law with you. Follow his words again from the start of verse 13. And remember, at the first point the us he's talking about is US Jews who were under the curse in the first place, vs. 13...

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we - we all of us - might receive the promise of the Spirit.

The question is, how many generations of Christians haven't understood that? How many still live under the curse of never knowing if they've done enough? That they might never be quite good enough... to be accepted by God. Well, the easy answer is, you never will and you never can. You need to trust Jesus instead.

And join the family.

And again. There in verse 16. Here's the logic.

The promises were given first. To Abraham and his seed. Which is another way of saying his family after him. Not seeds, not many families. but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

The family God was promising to Abraham... Paul says that's nothing like the multiple fractured church family meal split between the Jew table and the Gentile table and the black table and the white. God's promise wasn't multi families. God's promise was one family. One family in Christ.

In other words, if you want a part of God's blessing, this is where you find it. The first contract; the original deal, the promise of this one family of Abraham. And you become part of that by coming to Christ.

Which is what he's expanding down in verse 28. Whatever you were - now you're all one in Christ Jesus. God didn't promise a splintered, divided, type of family. Or a we'll do it this way and you do it that way type of family. One family. Integrated. God's promise was one family. So be one.

At which point I guess the Jews in Galatia are still saying, that's fine. As long as these Gentiles follow the family rules. They can join us as long as they take on the laws of Moses. But here's where they've missed the point.

Look again. Because to make one family out of people who have had the law and people who haven't had the law, one side has to change. And Paul spells out who it is. See if you can follow it in verse 17 and 18. Paul says "What I'm saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, doesn't invalidate the

covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. Because if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. "

Here's the Old Testament history lesson. The fact is, God started blessing Abraham's family way before the 430 years they spent in Egypt, way before Moses came and led them back to the promised land and gave them the law. God's promise was there calling the family together way before the commandments even came.

"What I am saying is this..." verse 17. "The law, which came 430 years later, doesn't invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, if being in the one family of God depends on keeping the law, then it's no longer based on a promise. But God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise."

And yet we've had generations of Australians, who still think keeping the Old Testament law is the way to God's blessing. I saw a sticker on the back of a minister's car one day. It said. The ten commandments are not multiple choice. It's been taught at our bible colleges. It's been preached in our churches. Maybe you've been brought up on it. And yet Paul says, the family inheritance isn't based on law. It's based on the promise. It's been there in the covenant right from the start.

And so comes the question, well, are you saying it's like the law is somehow an enemy of the promise? That there's something wrong with the commandments of

God? To which Paul says, no... the law was given because we Israelites needed looking after and limiting. But it was never God's plan that the law was going to bring his one family of blessing together. Moses was just middle man for Israel. And only for a time.

Follow verse 19. He says, the law was given to because of our transgressions. Until the one family would come to which the promise had been made.

The law wasn't given to make people righteous. If it was. You wouldn't need a savior. If you jump down to verse 24 he puts it plainly. Here's the point of the law.

Galatians 3:24 ²⁴ So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.

Galatians 3:25 ²⁵ Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.

Galatians 3:26 ²⁶ You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus,

It's funny, isn't it, if we've brought up with all these rules. What you can and can't do on a Sunday. Can you mow the lawn? Can you go to the footy? Can you hang out the washing? Can you buy Sunday lunch at McDonalds? And yet there are people who come to faith in Jesus these days who have been brought up with none of that stuff. Do you reckon it's up to we who were brought up the other way to push them into the mold? Teach them the rules? Paul says no!

See, verse 26 and 27, it's a word of reassurance to the new family members who are maybe thinking they're second rate. Paul's saying, no matter what anyone else

wants to tell you about taking on the law, being circumcised, the rules are, there are no extra rules. Other than faith in Christ Jesus. Verse 26, back where we started... "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." And that's without distinction. One family. Just the way God promised. One family, under God's promised blessing. Verse 28 and 29. This is the one family in the world where there distinctions are wiped away. He says "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

Now, if you got lost along the way somewhere. Those last verses make it clear.

And we maybe need to be **reminded** of what he's saying. Bringing together a blended family is never easy. But if you belong to Christ, that's what you're part of. **One family**. Not defined by the law of Moses any more. But by **faith in Jesus**.

And for us I guess it goes two ways. On one hand you might be made to feel like you're something less than a full member of the family. On the other you might be the one who thinks of other people that way. I wonder where the dividing lines are for us?

They COULD be along the lines of people who want you to live by their rules. But it could be other ways to. Like your voting preference. You liberal or labour? Or maybe your social standing, the car you drive. Or one that's big I think in most churches. Your length of membership.

There are a number of ways you can be treated like a half member. But whatever you do. Don't get sucked into the culture. And keep your ancient credentials in your back pocket. If you're living by faith in Jesus. You're a Son of God. And one of the children of Abraham. So don't be weighed down by those things people want to measure you by.

Because we're one family of faith. We might be diverse, we might be some of us even a little bit weird. But we're one family. God's plan was **always** to bring together one big Brady Bunch family made up of all kinds of people. Not under law. But under Jesus.

And by faith if you're a Christian. You're a full member. So let's live with that reality in mind.

Galatians 3:28-29 ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.