

Leader's & Participant's Guide

January 28 & 29, 2012

Here are this week's questions based off of the most recent sermon. Along with the questions, you will find the additional verses from the bulletin insert, and on occasion a useful "sermon memory question." In addition, the sermon transcript is included for further study. There are arranged in the following sections:

- Launching Question(s): for "launching" a discussion (i.e. "ice breakers")
- Your personal interaction with the sermon: These seek to raise discussion that has arisen from how the sermon has impacted you personally and any interaction or discussions that you've experienced that have arisen from reading the Scriptures and since the delivery of the sermon.
- Reflective Questions: these draw attention to illustrations and points taken directly from the sermon.
- Application Questions: in that 1 Timothy 1:5 says that "the goal of our instruction is love," these questions seek to develop a plan of action that focuses on deepening your faith and demonstrating that faith (as in Hebrews 10:24, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.")



Christ Community Church Purpose Statement

"To make disciples of Jesus who glorify God by following Christ daily."

The Newness That Faith Brings

Verses from the insert:

Galatians 3:21-29 Is the law, therefore, opposed to the promises of God? Absolutely not! For if a law had been given that could impart life, then righteousness would certainly have come by the law. 22 But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. 23 Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. 24 So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. 25 Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law. 26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 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.

Romans 3:19-20 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

John 14:15 "If you love me, keep my commands."

Jeremiah 31:33 "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the LORD. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Additional Verses:

James 4:12 There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?

Romans 7:12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

Romans 2:14 – 15 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,¹⁵ since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

2 Corinthians 11:24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one.

Matt. 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Matthew 25:41 “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Genesis 12:1-3 The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you.² “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”

Genesis 15:1-6, 18 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward.² But Abram said, “O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?”³ And Abram said, “You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir.”⁴ Then the word of the LORD came to him: “This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir.”⁵ He took him outside and said, “Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.”⁶ Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.¹⁸ On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates—

Genesis 17:1-8 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, “I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.² I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.”³ Abram fell facedown, and God said to him,⁴ “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.⁵ No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.⁶ I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.⁷ I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.⁸ The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God.”

Launching Questions

1. What responsibilities do you seek to instill in your children? What values? When you “came of age,” what responsibilities did you shoulder well? What freedoms were you most looking forward to?

Questions from your interaction with the Scripture and the sermon

2. Read Galatians 3:21 – 29. What observation(s) from last week’s message stand out?
3. As the meaning of the original message was unpacked, what discoveries did you make?
4. Where were you most challenged with last week’s message? Most encouraged?

Questions from the sermon’s illustrations & key points

5. Reflect on the following two points from the sermon:
If Jesus is your Savior, you have been:
 - redeemed from the penalties required of the law;
 - released from the guardian (, not so you can live a more childish life, but so you can live a more mature and responsible life).With which of these two areas do you face the most consistent struggles? What will you do to strengthen your faith in that area? In which area have you experienced the greatest growth? What has led to that growth?
6. What forms of legalism influence Christians today? How does legalism influence or threaten your faith?
7. Recall the following illustration (presented with the point that, “If Jesus is your Savior, you have been renewed):
Illustration: In Physics “resonance” is the effect produced when you have two things that vibrate with reinforcing vibrations that are sympathetic to each other. I am told that you can take a tuning fork and strike to so that it begins to vibrate and sound a certain pitch, then if you bring it up close to another tuning fork of the same pitch and without even touching the second tuning fork will begin to vibrate in sympathy with the first at the same or similar frequency. This is how violins make such beautiful music. The body of the violin is crafted in such a way that when the musician causes the string to vibrate the sensitive body of the instrument begins to vibrate in sympathy with the string and the air inside the body begins to vibrate so that the sound is intensified and reinforced and deepened. What God does by his Spirit is create within the believing heart the capacity to vibrate, to resonate in sympathy with His will, His words, and his commands. This is why in Romans 7, even while Paul confesses his struggle with sin he says, I delight in the law of God in my heart.
Where is God working in your life to “resonate in sympathy” with His will, His words, and His commands?
8. The previous illustration points to a different mindset and approach to living in relationship with God. How does this different approach affect: a) how you change; b) how you can expect to grow?

Application Questions

9. Recall the illustration of the Prodigal Suspicion (from Sinclair Ferguson's book entitled *Children of the Living God*):

Although the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 is one of the best loved of the parables, the lesson it teaches us is often overlooked. Jesus was underlining the fact that the reality of the love of God for us is the last thing to dawn on us. As we fix our eyes on ourselves, our past failures, our present guilt, it seems impossible that the Father should love us. So many Christians go throughout life with the prodigal's suspicion. Their concentration is on their sin and failure. All their thoughts are introspective, and that's why, in the Greek text of 1John 3:1, John's statement about the Father's love begins "behold", behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us that we should be called children of God. Like the prodigal, we have a native inability to believe that salvation is completely by grace and love. We are slow to realize the implications of this. We have the status of sons, but we have the mind-set of a hired servant.

Look at the areas where you are slow to return to God (i.e. after sinning or struggling). Where are you likely to doubt God's love and grace toward you? When do you expect God to respond in an employee-employer relationship? What do you need to do to correct your understanding of God in this area?

10. Consider the two points from the message: a) we have a new status (God's children, and heirs with Christ); b) we have a new struggle (to believe His promises). What distinctions arise from viewing oneself as a hired servant as compared to a child of the King? In your opinion, how do you think most people would respond when asked, "What would you identify as your leading struggle in your relationship with God?" Would their response center more on their behavior or their belief?
11. Make a list of the spiritual changes you would like to see in your life. How would believing God's promise empower each of these areas? What do you need to do to make sure your approach to the change you seek stems from living like a child of God and not from being a prisoner of the law?

FIELD REPORTS: Investing and Inviting

"Field Reports" include updates on the progress each individual is making in living a spiritual and missional life. Field Reports offer encouragement, accountability, constant reminders to be on mission, and an opportunity to celebrate God's work in and through us in the world.

To help facilitate the Field Reports, the following questions, which were used when we began the field reports are provided to assist you:

INVESTING

- If you were to identify 2 – 5 people in your network who are far from God, what names would be on that list?

The following questions are intended to address each individual on the list you made from question immediately above:

- When will you pray for them?

- What are two practical, measurable ways that you can demonstrate Christ's love to each individual on this list? Why do you believe these will be the most effective expressions with each individual?
- What do you see as a common ground shared by this individual and yourself? Where and when do you have opportunity to connect with them?
- How can you diagnose their need for the gospel? What wound or hurt have they experienced that can show them their need for God? What specific ideas or idols are keeping them from a relationship with God?

INVITING

- What invitation will you give to build this relationship? **NOTE:** This does not necessarily mean inviting them to a church activity. Any invitation to a church activity should come later in the relationship when trust has been built and they can see you truly love them.

The Newness that Faith Brings

I thought it was interesting recently when I stumbled across a quote by the rapper Lil Wayne. During his eight-month prison term, Lil Wayne commented that he took time every day to read the Bible. In an interview last year (2011) in *The Rolling Stone*, magazine Lil Wayne summarized his impression of the Bible. He said: *"It was deep! I liked the parts where some character was once this, but he ended up being that. Like he'd be dissing Jesus, and then he ends up being a saint. That was cool."* [Note: By using this illustration, we're not condoning the violent lyrics in some of Lil Wayne's music. This quote merely reflects Lil Wayne's insightful reaction to the Bible.]

That quote made me smile because it sounds like Lil Wayne and I like one of the same things when it comes to the Bible. Don't we all like the stories of people's lives being changed? That's a big part of the message of the Bible and the promise of the gospel. It's also one of the main themes of the book of Galatians and the passage we've read. What God is using Paul to communicate in Galatians, what Paul is so passionate about is that there is a right way and a wrong way to go after the change that we certainly need in our lives. There is a wrong way to go after change that leads to condemnation and a curse. There is a right way that leads to freedom and blessing. That's what this passage: **Galatians 3:24-29** is about. In these verses Paul shows us the first the wrong way and then the right way to live and grow and change as Christians. Let's look at each of these.

First he warns us away from the wrong way to follow Jesus. If we want to be very direct about this here's what he says:

I. DON'T LIVE LIKE A PRISONER OF THE LAW.

Look at **verses 23-25**: If you look carefully at these verses you see a couple of key words that underscore the fact that something has changed historically and personally and we should not go back to the way things used to be. Notice the first words in **verse 23** are *Before this faith came...* later in the same verse it says, *we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed.* So words like *before*, and *until*, tell you that something has changed. Something is no longer the same. **Verse 24** continues, *So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.* Listen to what **verse 25** says so strongly. *Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.* Now it is clear that something important has happened and we are no longer under the supervision of the law. *I think there are three key words that can help us understand the reason and the sense in which we are no longer under the supervision of the Law.*

First,

A. If Jesus is your Savior, You Have Been Redeemed.

You have been *redeemed*, or you could say, *rescued* from all the penalties and punishments that the law required from those who disobeyed God. **Galatians 3:13** says *Christ redeemed us from*

the curse by becoming a curse for us. We've spent a lot of time on this in previous sermons. It's the gospel that assures us that we are accepted by God, forgiven and declared righteous in God's eyes through faith in Jesus, plus nothing.

That's the first word, "Redeemed" Second,

B. If Jesus is your Savior, You Have Been Released.

Sometimes I come across a blog in which some skeptic is attacking Christians as hypocrites because we no longer practice all the details of the law that God gave the Jews in the Old Testament. But it is not hypocrisy that we no longer live under the burden of the many detailed laws God gave the Jewish people. The Bible itself tells us God gave those laws for a particular time in history prior to the coming of Christ to protect and prepare the Jewish people for His coming. Now, we have been *released* from the Old Testament laws.

Illustration: When Paul talks about the *supervision* of the law he uses a word that paints a picture. The Greek word translated by the phrase, "under the supervision", is related to the word in **verse 24** translated, "put in charge". Both words are related to the word for a special kind of slave who served in ancient households. This slave, called a *paidagogos* was a slave *put in charge* of young boys to *supervise* them on behalf of their parents until they reached a certain maturity chosen by the father, usually between 14 and 18 years old. *The English Standard Version* brings this out in the translation when it says the law was our "guardian" to lead us to Christ. It a very helpful picture that communicates a lot when you reflect on it.

Suppose as you were a little boy and you were placed under the supervision of a strict guardian. This guardian, set up a specific diet and a dress code to keep you healthy and clean. There were a lot of rules he put in place: you had to be up at 7:00 am, make your bed his way and do your homework before you played. In addition, most importantly according to your Father's will, the guardian taught you to be honest, and to be diligent, and to do your work, and to be kind to others. When you disobeyed, he disciplined you. But then the day comes when you pass out from under his supervision. So now, you are no longer under the supervision of the guardian. You become a mature child in the Father's house. How do you live now? What changes? There are some rules from which you are released. You don't *have* to comply with the old diet or dress code or the particular way of making your bed or that exact time of waking up. There is tremendous freedom to make your own choices about most of your life. At the same time there are some virtues that were part of your training under the guardian that transcend that relationship; honesty, diligence, and kindness, are not like the diet and the dress code. So while you are no longer under the supervision of the guardian any more that doesn't mean it doesn't matter how you live. You have been released from the guardian not so you can live a more childish life but so you can live a more mature and responsible life.

It's not just that there is a new set of laws, a better set of laws but a whole new freedom in and approach to life that isn't *as* focused on the laws anymore. It is more about faith, and love and relationship.

You have been redeemed from the curse of the law and released from the supervision of the law. And there is another element...

C. If Jesus is your Savior, You have been *Renewed*.

When the prophets under the Old Covenant predicted the coming of a New Covenant one of the things they revealed as part of the New Covenant is that God would write his laws on our hearts by his Holy Spirit. **Jeremiah 31:33** says, *"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,"* declares the LORD. *"I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.* Then Jeremiah does something interesting. He ties this promise of the new Covenant to the promise God had made to Abraham, the promise in Genesis 17 in which God says, *I will be their God, and they will be my people.* 8 A few verses back, **Galatians 3:14** we were told that when we believe in Jesus we receive the promise of the Holy Spirit. When you receive Christ the Holy Spirit renews something in your heart. This is something deeper than just having a God-given conscious.

Illustration: In Physics “resonance” is the effect produced when you have two things that vibrate with reinforcing vibrations that are sympathetic to each other. I am told that you can take a tuning fork and strike it so that it begins to vibrate and sound a certain pitch, then if you bring it up close to another tuning fork of the same pitch and without even touching the second tuning fork will begin to vibrate in sympathy with the first at the same or similar frequency. This is how violins make such beautiful music. The body of the violin is crafted in such a way that when the musician causes the string to vibrate the sensitive body of the instrument begins to vibrate in sympathy with the string and the air inside the body begins to vibrate so that the sound is intensified and reinforced and deepened. What God does by his Spirit is create within the believing heart the capacity to vibrate, to resonate in sympathy with His will, His words, and his commands. This is why in **Romans 7**, even while Paul confesses his struggle with sin he says, *I delight in the law of God in my heart.*

For a person who has been *redeemed, released and renewed* in all these ways to try to grow up, by going back and living like a child under the strict supervision of the law is to miss the point. Something has happened historically that has to affect us personally. There is a new way to live in relationship to God. It is a different mindset, and approach and it makes a difference in how you change and grow.

How should we live? We should live like sons of God.

II. LIVE LIKE SONS OF GOD WHO HAVE COME OF AGE.

That's the point of **verses 26**, *You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*, This continues the illustration that Paul has been using. The word; “son” in **verse 26**, is the word used of a mature son who had “come of age”. When **verse 27** says *for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ*, it pictures a part of the coming of age ceremony when the son would be given new clothing that symbolized that he had come of age. It was called the *toga virilis*. The toga was a white robe that Roman men wore. *Virilis*, related to *virile*, mean a grown man. This was a big transition in life. It means the young man no longer had a

paidagogos, or child guardian but was now responsible for his own welfare and actions. What we are to understand from this is that there is a new way that God wants us to live our lives as His children.

What it means is we have a new status and a new struggle.

A. We have a new status.

Let this sink in. He says we are *all sons of God!* That isn't about sexism it is about status in the ancient world. How do we become sons? Through *faith*, not our works but faith in Christ Jesus plus nothing. It's the same for all who believe in Jesus. **Verse 28**, *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* We are all equal before God and one with each other in Christ. We are supposed to picture Christ and us in Him, God sees you, male or female and clothed with Christ and he says, *this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.* And then **verse 29** says: *If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

The promise: The ultimate promise. The promise Paul has been talking about. The fountain of all the other promises, the promise made to Abraham and quoted by Jeremiah first appears in Genesis when God revealed himself to Abraham as El Shaddai (God Almighty, God All-sufficient) and formally gave him the covenant promise, **Genesis 17:7** *I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant ... to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.*

Illustration: Thomas Brooks, a theologian from the 1600s, says:

[T]hat is as if he said, You shall have as true an interest in all my attributes for your good, as they are mine for my own glory . . . My grace, saith God, shall be yours to pardon you, and my power shall be yours to protect you, and my wisdom shall be yours to direct you, and my goodness shall be yours to relieve you, and my mercy shall be yours to supply you, and my glory shall be yours to crown you. This is a comprehensive promise, for God to be our God: it includes all.

Faith in Christ brings us into a relationship big with promise and blessing. We have this new status and with this new status...

B. We have a new struggle.

Do you know what the struggle is? It's the struggle to believe. That's what Paul keeps bringing us back to over and over again.

Illustration: One of our problems is we think we believe more than we really do. There is a famous British bible scholar and teacher who lives in the United States now ; Sinclair Ferguson. He has written a book titled *Children of the Living God*. In it he talks about something I have experienced but never heard named before.

He calls it, *The Prodigal's Suspicion*. You know the familiar and famous story of The Prodigal Son in the Bible. Sinclair Ferguson points out that when the prodigal son returns there is

something missing in his repentance. Having sinned and dishonored his father, he comes back and says, *“I am not worthy to be called your Son, let me live on the estate and just work for you as one of your hired hands.”*

Listen to what Ferguson says about that:

Although the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15 is one of the best loved of the parables, the lesson it teaches us is often overlooked. Jesus was underlining the fact that the reality of the love of God for us is the last thing to dawn on us. As we fix our eyes on ourselves, our past failures, our present guilt, it seems impossible that the Father should love us, So many Christians go throughout life with the prodigal's suspicion. Their concentration is on their sin and failure. All their thoughts are introspective, and that's why, in the Greek text of 1John 3:1, John's statement about the Father's love begins *“behold”*, *behold what manner of love the Father has given unto us that we should be called children of God*. Like the prodigal, we have a native inability to believe that salvation is completely by grace and love. We are slow to realize the implications of this. We have the *status of sons*, but we have the *mind-set* of a hired servant.

You see what the prodigal does is what we do. We say, *“I don't feel worthy I won't ask for a father-son relationship with God I'll just ask for a boss-employee relationship.”* That's all I can imagine asking. Think about that. Isn't that another variation on what Paul is talking about here in Galatians? The temptation to doubt the bigness of God's love and grace in Christ and to just want an employee-employer relationship with God, to put ourselves *under the supervision of the law* because we don't fully believe that he has called us out of that to live like his beloved children. When we relate to God like that, we are slow to fully return to him after we have sinned or struggled. We don't expect his kind of extravagant love, his embrace. When we do return we tend to think of Him as master more than Father. Do you remember what the Father did when the son said, *let me be a hired servant*? He fell on his neck and kissed him much.

Illustration: There is an old story I have heard a number of Bible teachers use over the years. It is supposedly about Alexander the Great. In this story one of his soldier friends comes to him and says my daughter is getting married and I don't have money for this. Will you give me what I need for her marriage and wedding? And Alexander says, Yes. What do you need? And the man gives him an amazing outrageous sum. All the people who hear it are shocked but Alexander's face lit up and he said, “yes!” you can have it. Take it! After the man leaves someone turns to Alexander the Great and says, That man asked for so much, why are you so excited to give it to him. And Alexander said, *“He did me a great honor. His request means He believes I am not only fabulously wealthy but incredibly generous.”*

If what God is so clearly saying is true, remembering the emphasis earlier in Galatians on *believing what you have heard*, then to come to him with the attitude that says, *“I don't believe you would really treat me as a beloved Son so just let me get by as a hired hand”*, is an insult to his goodness and generosity and a lack of faith in his word and his promises. It's is not believing he is as rich in grace and as willing to love and bless those who belong to him as he says he is.

CONCLUSION

You say you truly believe you are redeemed by grace, clothed with Christ, a child of God, and an

heir of all his promises? If so why are you so worried? Why are you so sensitive to criticism? Why is it so hard to admit it when you are wrong or to say you are sorry? Why do you so often secretly compare yourself to others and either feel terrible about yourself or put others down and judge them to make yourself feel better? Why are you so sad, fearful, anxious or angry? Why is there so often an emptiness inside that proves very vulnerable to all kinds of temptations?

Can you imagine how fully believing would give you strength, a love, a gratitude, and peace that you could never achieve by simply trying? Make a list of all the spiritual changes you would like to see in your life. Then ask yourself, How would believing God's promise empower these changes? Then choose to turn every reminder of those longed for changes into a renewal of your faith in the Jesus.

Don't live like a prisoner of the law, live like a child of God. That's the primary message of this passage.

Verse 26 says: *You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.* If you have not put your faith in Christ, start there. Do that and become a child, a son of God. Believe that Christ died for your sins, that he loved you and gave himself for you. Trust in him as your Savior.

If you *have* put your faith in Christ than keep putting your faith in Christ. It is faith, from start to finish and in every situation: big faith, daily faith, continual faith in God's promises and in the God who makes the promises. Meet *every* temptation and *every* struggle, *every* day with a response of faith. That is the right way to go after change and growth in Christ. The real power for change comes from God and is received by faith.

Amen.