

"Who's Your Daddy"

Galatians 3:23-29

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. (ESV)

If you've been around for the Galatians series, you'll know that the apostle Paul, as he wrote this letter, was writing to combat a major error, and the error had to do with how people were saved from their sins. Remember, Paul came through Galatia and he preached that Jesus plus nothing equals everything. In other words, if you want to be saved from your sins, all you must do is exercise faith in Jesus Christ, and trust in the fact that He lived the life you should have lived and that He died the death you should have died. However, people came around behind him and started to teach, "Well that's good, you do need to trust Jesus, but you also need to be circumcised, and while you're at it, you should obey the law." Paul has to address this, and he addresses it by teaching us a number of doctrines. So far, as we have looked at the book of Galatians, he has addressed two major doctrines of the Christian faith, but he hasn't addressed the most important one yet. He's addressed the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In other words, what does it mean to be right with God or how is a person made right with God? This doctrine that we call justification is an act of God's free grace where He pardons all of our sins and imputes, or credits to us, the righteousness of Jesus. In other words, to be counted righteous before God is purely an act of grace, and the doctrine of justification is incredibly important. Presbyterians talk about it all the time, at least most Presbyterians that I know. The other doctrine Paul talks about is sanctification. Justification is an act of free grace. Sanctification, on the other hand, is a work of free grace where we are made more and more like Christ and more and more dead to our sins. The simple way to put that is: are you becoming more and more like Jesus or do you trust Jesus to finish the job that He started? Justification is starting a work in you, and sanctification is Him finishing a work in you. Now those are two important doctrines, some would say central to the Christian faith, but there is one doctrine that is more important than both of those, at least subjectively, because it's a doctrine that changes everything.

It is interesting: today is Anthony [First EPC's Director of Music]'s last day, so you'll notice among all the hymns and songs that there is a common theme. Have you noticed singing? We didn't plan it like this, but it providentially happened. Up to this point, Paul has been giving us the words of the gospel, or the math, if you will. Today Paul teaches us how to sing. In other words, he begins to teach us the music of the gospel. Now, what it is they can teach you in the music of the gospel? It is this third doctrine. You see, the first doctrine that Paul talks about, justification, has to do with our relationship to God as lawgiver and judge, and if you are counted righteous before Him, He is no longer your lawgiver and judge. The second doctrine, sanctification, has to do with your relationship to God as your Lord and your master. That's good too. Now, the problem is if you stop at justification and sanctification, you'll be an utterly miserable person. And guess what? In my experience, lots and lots of people who call themselves Christians are utterly miserable. Why is this? It's because we know the math, or at least I'm going to assume that you do. You know that God forgives our sins. He gives us righteousness in Jesus, and He's going to finish the job that He promised to finish. Why are people so miserable? It's because we don't understand the third doctrine that Paul addresses: the doctrine of adoption. Now, why is the doctrine of adoption subjectively more important than justification and sanctification (not necessarily objectively but how it affects you)? It's because the doctrine of adoption has to do with your relationship to God as Father. And if you're a Christian, you've probably grown up your whole life addressing God as you start your prayers, and you say, "Father you know this or Father that," and it's become just a placeholder, and the question is: Is God really your Father or is He just some being out there? That's what we're going to talk about today. In the context of Paul actually taking apart the argument that Jesus plus something equals salvation, he uses the doctrine of adoption as well. The doctrine of adoption does the same thing to the false teachers in Galatia that the doctrine of justification and sanctification did, because no one ever worked themselves into a family. You just can't do it. You're either in the family or you're not in the family. You're either born into the family or you're adopted into

the family, but you can't work your way into the family. It must be, at least in this context, according to God's grace. We're going to look at three things this morning.

The first thing we're going to look at is your drill sergeant. The second thing we're going to look at is your daddy. The third thing we're going to look at is your family. Okay, what am I getting at with drill sergeant? Look at the first two verses I read to you.

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.*

Remember the last verse we looked at last week? It said that scripture has imprisoned everything in sin, and Paul is continuing that metaphor. The first thing he talks about with regard to the law is that the law was your jailer, and the demands of the law are your jailer. What does he mean by that? Just this: you can't escape the demands of the law. You are in bondage to the demands of the law, and there is no hope for you. And that's why I came up with the idea of drill sergeant because I thought, "When did I feel like that most?" It was when I was in Basic Training. For those of you who have been someplace like Basic Training, what do you long for from about the first minute? You long for the last minute of Basic Training. You can't wait to get out of there. Why? Because it's like prison. You can't do anything except what they tell you to do, and no matter where you go, there is someone there, and you know you're not getting out until 120 days and a wakeup, 119 days and a wakeup, 118 days, and you're like the Count of Monte Cristo in your cell, just waiting to get out of there. It's miserable. That's what Paul says the law does to us. If you're going to say to yourself, "You know what, I'm just going to be a good moral person," then I can tell you why you feel like you can never escape or you can never be good enough, why it's never going to end, how you're never going to see any light at the end of the tunnel in your life, because the law is a prison. It's designed intentionally that way, because the nice part about the law as a prison is that it keeps you out of trouble. If you're in prison, you're not out and about getting into trouble, and the law in some sense imprisoned Israel until the faith came, and that is probably synonymous with the coming of Jesus when Paul says that. In other words, if Israel didn't have the law they would just be another Nomadic tribe until Jesus came, yet they had the law. It gave them some identity. But the interesting thing here is what else Paul says about the law. He says:

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

What is Paul talking about? First of all, remember he split time into two phases, if you will. The law was our guardian before Christ came and after Christ came, and until Christ came. Some translations of the Bible translate "guardian" as "schoolmaster" or something. That's wrong because it's not. It's the Greek word *pedagogue*. The pedagogue in the Ancient Near East, at least in the Greek world, had a very specific function. Usually a pedagogue was hired by wealthy families to oversee their male children from the ages of 6 years old until 16 years old, and the pedagogue's only job was to get that child from point A to point B. If you ever see pictures of Ancient Greece on pottery and things like that of a pedagogue, they always have a big stick with them. What do you think they used that stick for? It wasn't for teaching, at least not math and algebra and things. The pedagogue's job primarily was discipline. It was to keep that kid in line and to keep him on the straight and narrow path until he made it into his adulthood. When I think about that, I cannot think of anything more miserable in the world than someone looking over my shoulder every minute of the day, once again hearkening myself back to Basic Training. Even when you're not looking, they're looking at you even when you think no one's around. I just remembered one of the funniest things that happened: I reconnected with a bunch of my old Army buddies last week, and there was a guy in Basic Training who everyone hated. His name was Tanaka, and no one could stand him. One night he had KP, he came back, it was after dark, and he came into the barracks and said, "Hey, I stole a case of Twinkies, a dollar apiece," and I just let out a howl of laughter. He said, "What are you laughing about Allen?" And I said, "Look behind you." The intercom light was on! Drill Sergeant Jones was there in about 30 seconds. The pedagogue is always there. He's always watching. Why? Because the minute you step out of line, he's going to let you know about it, and Paul says that's what the law does. The law is your pedagogue. The law is your guardian. It keeps you on the straight and narrow, if you will, but you can never mess up, because as soon as you mess up, he's got the stick with which to hit you. Now, the beautiful thing about the gospel is Paul said that's a temporary state. It's temporary for Israel and it's temporary for you. If you

feel like that right now, I've got good news for you. He says it was only like that until Christ came, and Christ has come. And what happened? Paul tells us very specifically at the end of the verse. He says *the law was our guardian until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith.*

If you remember, when Paul keeps saying that we're justified by faith not the law, the question in people's minds and hearts would be, "Why bother with the law?" And Paul has shown us over and over all these things that the law does. In this particular case, the purpose of the law is to keep us in line until we get to Christ. It's always interesting to me. I didn't grow up in church, so my perspective is different, but when you meet people who have grown up in church and their parents were really strict or the church was really strict, and they say, "I'm out of here because I don't want to have anything to do with it," I can't help but think to myself, "The very thing you're complaining about is what God uses to drive people to Jesus, the very thing." You're saying, "Church is too strict, I can't handle it, I don't have what it takes to obey all those rules." If you say that, you understand the gospel better than those people. Don't leave! Come back! The purpose of the law is to drive you to Jesus so that you might be justified by faith not the law. That's the great news of the gospel! Once you are justified by faith and once you trust Jesus, God immediately transforms from being your drill sergeant to being your daddy. That's huge! It really is because most people in this room have daddy issues, right? I do. My dad left when I was 5 years old, and I spent most of my life waiting for him to come riding back on a white horse, and he never showed up. At some point, I became a Christian, and I'm still waiting for my other dad, and all of a sudden I realized that I had a father—finally! That's what Paul tells us next. You don't have a drill sergeant anymore. You have a daddy. Paul says:

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.*

So he says we're no longer under a guardian. Why? He says we're now all sons of God but only in a qualified sense. Is every human being a son or daughter of God? The answer biblically speaking is no. Can every human being be a son or daughter of God? The biblical answer is yes, because you become a son or daughter of God in Christ. If you want God to be your father, you do that through faith in Christ. Now here's the beauty of the gospel. Here you have Jesus who is the perfect son, who never did anything wrong, never sinned, never did anything but show compassion and love and mercy. Jesus becomes an orphan so that all of us orphans can become sons and daughters. Remember what Jesus yelled on the cross among other things? "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*" Jesus was becoming an orphan so that you and I might become sons and daughters. He became an outcast so that you and I might be brought in. Jesus was the ultimate insider, it doesn't get much more inside than being part of the Trinity, and yet Jesus became the ultimate outsider so that you and I might be brought in to become an insider that we might become sons of God. Sons, I think I told you last week, is generic. It means that whether you're male or female, you have all of the rights of the firstborn son. In other words, if you are in Christ, you have all of the rights that Jesus has. With justification, you have all the righteousness that Jesus has imputed to you. With adoption, you have all of the fatherly affection that God has for Jesus given to you as well that God is your father. Most of the issues we have result in the fact that we don't really believe that. In other words, we might believe justification. We might have good doctrine on sanctification, but the question is: Do we believe that God actually loves us like a father loves his children? We don't. I don't a lot of times. Instead, you live like orphans, and you can tell if you live like an orphan by asking yourself, "Do I always try and control things?" Orphans have to control because they don't think anyone else has their back. "Am I always trying to make sure I've got myself taken care of or even my family taken of?" Orphans often also tend to confess other people's sins because an orphan is constantly looking for affirmation. Are you constantly looking for affirmation? Some of you are I know because I see it in you that you're constantly looking. What if you didn't have the affirmation of the people around you? I mean some people have left the church before, whether it's me or Jeff [Jeremiah, a former senior pastor] or other churches, because they don't think they have the pastor's affirmation. You know what? You don't need the pastor's affirmation, not if the gospel is true. The only affirmation you need (if the gospel is true you already have it) is the affirmation of God your Father. "Father" is the key word there. My favorite question in the Heidelberg Catechism is question #26 which asks the question: What do you believe when you say I believe in God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth? I'm going to summarize it for you. It says that I believe that the same God who is the Father of Jesus has become my Father because of Jesus, and that whatever adversity He sends me in this sad world, He will turn to my good. And then it

says this, and this is the greatest line: He is able to do this because He is almighty God. He desires to do this because He is a faithful Father. When you pray do you go to God as if He were a faithful Father, or do you go to Him as if He is simply almighty God? In other words, do you just throw your prayers out there and say, "You know what God, I know you could heal my cancer, I know you could fix my marriage, I know you could do this," and it's just out there because He is the almighty creator God, He is able to do anything He wants to do, and then we sit back and don't expect anything? Or do you go to Him as your Father, your daddy, and say, "You know I've got cancer, you know my marriage is going under, you know all these things", and you say, "You love me, You say You care about me." "Will You help me?" He desires to help you. He desires to do you good. Do you go to God like that?

I'm constantly amazed at what my children are able to get out of me. A week or so ago, Abby came to me. You see, I get an allowance at home just like the kids do, and Abby came and said, "Dad, do you have five dollars?" And I said, "I've got five dollars, yeah, I do." She said, "You know five bucks I can borrow, but actually it'd be nice if I could have five bucks." She turned to walk away, and she said, "By the way, are you using your truck for the rest of the day?" She got the truck too! Why did she get the truck? Because she asked. She asked, and I as a father want to give her anything I can and am able to give her what is good for her. And think about this those of you who are parents: what's one of the most frustrating things in the world about your kids? And kids, listen to this. This is important for you too. It's not when your children misbehave. It's when you know you could help them and you want to help them, and they either refuse to ask or they refuse to receive it. Now, some of you help too much, but you know what I mean. If the child would just come to me and ask, I would help them with this problem. And they don't come, and it breaks your heart.

Imagine what God is thinking when all we're doing is talking about justification and sanctification: Come to Me not just as One who has forgiven your sins and not just as the One who is going to promise something, but come to Me as your Father. Do you want to know what it's like for God to be your Father? Read Luke 15, *Parable of The Prodigal Son*. Remember, the prodigal leaves. He treats the father as dead, and when he decides to come back to be a servant, what does the father do? Just fold his arms and wait until he can discipline him? The father runs after the son! The benediction I always use is Zephaniah 3:17: "*The Lord your God shouts over you with great shouts of joy.*" Only a parent can shout over their child with great shouts of joy because some of you shout for your kids at soccer games and other things, and they're not that good. But why do you shout over them? I do the same thing. Because they're my kids. They could come in last in the swim meet. They could come in last in soccer, but because they're my kids, I will shout over them for as long as I have breath, and that's what God's promises to you. You are a son now, and with the son also comes responsibility to walk like the Father would have you walk and also to know the Father disciplines sometimes. You see that until you understand God as your Father, you really can't understand what comes next. But what comes next is just as important. Realizing that God is your Father is realizing that every other person who has trusted Jesus is your brother and sister. That's big because not only does God go from drill sergeant to being a daddy, but in the blink of an eye you now have a family. Look all around you. Those who have trusted Jesus are genuinely your family. Remember a few weeks ago I preached on our unity with Christ? Whoever is united to Christ is united to all those around you, like it or not. Notice what Paul says next:

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.*

Verse 27 is interesting. He says, "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" What is he talking about there? Well for one thing, it's just this: What's the purpose of baptism? It's a sign and a seal just like the Lord's Supper is a sign in that it points to something. It points to the fact that we have had our sins forgiven, and that just as water washes away dirt, so the blood of Jesus has washed away our sins, and it engrafts us into Jesus. But also it's a seal, and what I mean by seal is during the old days they would get a document and they would seal it. In other words, baptism is like getting your adoption papers. You trust Jesus, you are adopted into God's family, and you get papers for it. Does baptism save you? Absolutely not. It is interesting to me as I was thinking about it this week. Since everyone in the room would agree that baptism doesn't save you, at some level every baptism is an infant baptism. I mean the argument against infant baptism, of course, is that the person hasn't put their faith in Christ. Well you know you can't ever really know until the end anyway. I've seen many

baptized adults walk away from the faith. They've broken covenant. The point is just this: The outward sign of baptism, whether it's administered as a child or it's administered as an adult, has the same function. Hopefully, it becomes the outward sign of an inward reality that you are now in Christ, and not only that, but you have put on Christ. What do I mean by that? I think I learned this from Tim Keller that you've never seen a bride walking down the aisle in a swimsuit, have you? How come? Not just because it would be inappropriate to walk down the aisle in a swimsuit at a wedding. Everyone sees all of your flaws, every one of them. You'll never see that, only the YouTube underwater ones. That's not what I'm talking about. I mean a normal wedding because people want to look their best. If you want to look your best, what do you do? You put on a gorgeous gown, and that is what Paul is getting at. Actually, the language there is *toga barillas*. Remember that child that went from 6 to 16 and then comes out as a man. He would put on a new garment, the toga, as a sign of what he was and whose he was, and Paul says everyone has put on that garment if they have trusted Jesus. What does he mean by everyone? By everyone he means everyone, and Paul cuts to the quick. Basically, the three issues that have plagued humanity since the very beginning: Race, economics and gender issues. In fact, Jewish rabbis used to say this prayer, and I imagine Paul used to say it as well. They wake up in the morning, and the first thing they would say is "God I thank You, I thank You that I am not a Gentile, I thank You that I am not a slave, and I thank You that I am not a woman." And what does Paul say? Look here in the gospel:

²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female.*

Now is he saying that no distinctions exist at all? Absolutely not! Is he saying if you trust Jesus you are no longer from one culture or another? Absolutely not! Is he saying once you trust Jesus, there is no male or female distinction at all, that everything's androgynous? Absolutely not! What he's saying is as we stand before Jesus, whether you are Jew or Greek, white or black or Asian, no matter who you are, male or female, rich or poor, you all stand before Jesus the same way: Desperately in need of forgiveness of your sins. And you all walk away from Jesus with the same thing, all of His righteousness imputed to you. In Jesus there is no Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. The fact that in Jesus we all have this great equality enables us to celebrate our differences. In other words, you can't have diversity unless you first have unity around the fact that in Jesus we are all equal. And what struck me this week more than anything was the very last line of verse 27 because that's where I think the church doesn't understand the full implications of the doctrine of adoption and the doctrine of being one. He says, "*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, there is no male and female.*" Then He says, "*For you are all one in Christ Jesus.*" Literally in the Greek there it says, "*For you are all one person in Christ Jesus.*" In other words, when we say we're all one that means we all agree on something, but He says you are one person in Christ Jesus. Now do you ever hear that language anywhere else in the bible? Male and female should leave their father or mother, they should cleave together and they should become what? One person, one flesh. So what is Paul saying here? He is saying that when you trust Jesus, not only are your sins forgiven, not only are you given His righteousness, not only is He going to promise to finish the job, God becomes your father and all these people become your family, but you are as united to them as you are to Jesus.

And what was I thinking about all week? Well, the first thing I thought: You cannot work out that unity except for in the context of the local church. The other thing that hit me was the kind of reasons that people leave churches are incredible given the fact that it's true. Imagine this:

Imagine you're in my shoes, you're a counselor or something, and someone comes into your office. A man comes in and says, "Pastor, I'm leaving my wife."

"Why?"

"She likes contemporary music."

"What?" "What kind of music do you like?"

"Organ."

"And you're just going to leave your wife because she likes contemporary music?" "How often does she listen to it?"

"I don't know, three or four songs a week."

"So you're going to leave your wife because she listens to contemporary music three or four times a week, and what would you rather have?"

"I'd rather her just listen to organ 100 percent of the time."

"And you're going to leave just like that, nothing else in your marriage matters besides that?"

"Nope."

Would you think that person was crazy or not? I would. I do! And yet it happens all the time. If you truly believe that you're united to people, what would you say to that person? I know what I would say. I'd say, "Well gosh, can't you guys cut a deal?" "Can't you listen to a little bit of her music and she listen to a little bit of your music?" That makes sense, doesn't it? And yet people can't do that. In the context of the local church, I'm shocked and amazed at how many people walk out the back door and divorce the church that they have been married to because they don't like this song or that song or this music or that music. It's amazing! It's a sin! You see, the great thing about America is that you're free to worship. The bad thing about America is that you're free to worship wherever you want. In other words, the way Christians treat church is as if the church had a no-fault divorce rule. "I don't like it here anymore, I'll just leave." And yet what the gospel says is that you are united to the people around you, and when you leave, something is torn apart. I wondered this week if that's why the church is constantly in a state of angst. How do you get over it? You have to preach the gospel to yourself. I was wondering how do we could get this through our heads, and then I took Flannery to see *Toy Story 3*, and it all clicked for me. How is it that we can start getting it through our heads that we don't just walk away? We'd made vows to a church whether it's this one or some other church. We don't just walk away. Somehow we're able to work through things. See *Toy Story 3*. If you haven't, I'm not going to tell you how the movie goes. I mean they all have relatively the same plot, but nonetheless all the toys are together and they have a big decision to make, and all the toys want to go one direction and Woody wants to go another direction.

Woody said, "You've got to come guys, we've got to stick together, we just can't break up like this."

And they said, "Well, we think it seems to be more comfortable over in this place."

And Woody said, "But we've got to go over here, it's the right place."

And they said, "Nah."

And he said, "I can tell you why we all have to go, why we have to stick together, why we can't separate."

And they said, "Why?"

And he lifted up his foot. Boom! He lifted up his foot and underneath his foot was written the name Andy, and he said, "Lift up your foot, lift up your foot."

"Why do we have to stick together?"

"Because we all belong to the same person," Woody would say.

And yet, to the extent you cannot stick together shows that you really don't understand that you belong to the same person, that all of the schisms in the church and when people leave, whether it's this church or any other church, is the direct result of our misunderstanding and not understanding the gospel of Jesus Christ, in particular the doctrine of adoption and our union with one another. That whatever happens to you happens to me, that we are to bear one another's burdens. Do we get that? I don't think so, and I'd encourage us to think through it. The next time you're angry at something, first of all look at your foot [He lifts foot and underneath his foot was written the name Jesus] and look at the people's feet around you and say to yourself, "I've got to stick with that person because he's got the same name on his foot that I have on my foot." So we're here together. Now the question is how are we going to work through things? Paul ends this passage by taking us all the way back to the beginning. He says if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise. Remember, the whole thing started because someone told the Gentiles, "You might not even be Abraham's offspring unless you get circumcised." And Paul says no, if you belong to Christ, if you have Jesus' name engraved on your feet, on the palms of your hands and you are in Christ, and Jesus is Abraham's offspring, then you also are Abraham's offspring. We are in this whole thing together, not only with each other but with the whole church throughout history. Keep that in mind.