

GALATIANS 3:26-29

NEITHER MALE NOR FEMALE

“In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 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. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.”¹

Astute readers of the **BOOK OF GALATIANS** will have noticed a transition at our text. Before this **TWENTY-SIXTH VERSE** Paul has employed the first person plural pronoun “we” throughout the letter. The first verse of our text, however, marks a change as from this point he uses the second person plural “you.” We should be careful not to make too much of this transition; but neither should we ignore the change; for surely the Spirit of God has not directed the Apostle to write in a superfluous manner.

This **TWENTY-SIXTH VERSE** marks a transition that is central to the Apostle’s argument to these factious saints. Before this, Paul has spoken of the promise [**GALATIANS 3:6–14**], which gave way to the Law [**GALATIANS 3:15–22**], which was in turn superseded by grace [**GALATIANS 3:23–25**]. Following this **TWENTY-SIXTH VERSE** the order will be reversed to form a rather complex chiasm. Grace will now be exalted [**GALATIANS 3:27–4:7**] as greater than Law [**GALATIANS 4:8–11**], which came as result of the promise [**GALATIANS 4:21–31**].

What is crucial to our understanding of the message today is that the verses of our text are dependent upon this **TWENTY-SIXTH VERSE**. Unfortunately, the **TWENTY-EIGHTH VERSE** has become a sort of battleground in the ongoing battle between the sexes. Subject to isolation by well-meaning saints with a personal agenda, the verse is often distorted until even the Apostle would be confused as to what he must have meant when he wrote the words. The verse cannot, however, be understood in isolation; it must be read in the light of the preceding verses and in light of the verses following.

ENTRANCE INTO THE FAMILY IS AN ISSUE OF FAITH — I do not doubt that the language of this **TWENTY-SIXTH VERSE** insults some women, especially those schooled in feminism. Paul writes, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” Nevertheless, the words are either those which were inspired by the Spirit of God or they are to be dismissed as mere remnants of Jewish patriarchal views of humanity. The Bible is quite precise in stating that “You are all *sons* [*huiōi*] of God.” There is no doubt that we are to understand that this encompasses all humanity, but the language does not permit us to retranslate this clause to meet our own gender bias.

It may be interest you that whenever Paul employs this particular phrase (*huiōi theōū*) it refers to the mature position of a believer in Christ [see **ROMANS 8:14; 9:26**]. By faith we become “children of God” (*tékna theōū*) as outlined in **JOHN 1:12**; however, a regenerate sinner becomes a son of God by adoption [cf. **GALATIANS 4:5**]. A child is a child because he or she has his or her parents’ nature, but the child is still immature and must grow into adulthood. Whereas in the material world a child does not enjoy mature responsibilities and privileges until reaching a predetermined age, in the spiritual realm a regenerated child is immediately placed in the position of sonship, enjoying all the privileges and responsibilities of sonship.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

The noun which is translated “adoption” in **GALATIANS 4:5** (*huiiothesían*) means “to be placed in the position of a son.” That act of adoption, receiving the full rights of sons, was determined by God in eternity past and has been finalised by the work of the Holy Spirit at the point of conversion. Christ came “to redeem those who were under law, so that we may be adopted as sons with full rights” [**GALATIANS 4:5 NET BIBLE**]. One under the tutelage of the school master of law could never be regarded as a son. What a rich heritage we would sacrifice were we to insist on gender neutral language! What a great sacrifice political correctness demands!

“You are all sons of God.” Paul is emphasising that those to whom he is writing are in his estimate mature. Though they may not necessarily have been acting in a mature manner (actually they were acting in quite an immature fashion), they nevertheless were even then heirs with the full rights of sons of God. You need not wait until some date far in the future to enjoy the full rights of sonship—the full rights of a son is your present possession by faith in Christ. At the point you became a child of God you received the full rights of a son. Even now you enjoy access into the presence of the Father, you enjoy the presence of His Holy Spirit, you hold unique spiritual gifts which He has distributed just as He decided, you have the promise of Heaven and all that God has planned for His precious sons.

Don’t permit yourself to get hung up on the issue of gender to the point that you are insulted by the language God chooses to employ. The gender of the word is far less important at this point than is the truth conveyed. Focus, if you will, on the fact that you no longer require a baby-sitter because you have entered into your full right as a son of God. Before Him you are already a recipient of all that He has promised. This is not to say that the Law no longer has any application in your life, but it does mean that the Law can no longer condemn you. The Law need no longer imprison you or destroy you. Whenever the wicked one comes to you pointing to your failure to keep the Law you need but remind yourself that you are no longer under the Law but under grace and that you have received the full rights of “a son of God.” If you permit yourself to enter again into the condemnation of the Law you are permitting yourself to be shackled, to be bewitched, and thus you turn your life in Christ into a pitiful anachronism.

“You are all sons of God through faith.” Your receipt of the full rights as a son of God has nothing to do with natural descent or with human effort. It is through faith that you have received this inheritance. We enter into this new relationship with God through faith. We become children of God through faith in God just as John says in his Gospel. “To those who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become children of God” [**JOHN 1:12**]. Similarly, we receive our inheritance as sons of God through faith. We are not slaves, labouring in order that we might achieve freedom—we are sons of God enjoying our freedom now.

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” The expression “in Christ” is found in Paul’s writings one hundred seventy-two times. Sometimes the expression is used in the instrumental sense of “by” or “through Christ.” However, it is more often used in the sense describing our participation in and union with Christ which is brought about for each believer by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Whatever else Paul may have meant in this **TWENTY-SIXTH VERSE** by using the phrase “in Christ Jesus,” it is obvious that Christ is central to the Christian’s right to access to the Father. Christ is at the heart of the Christian’s salvation and service. Christ is the centre of all that the Christian is or does. The Apostle, however, uses this point to make the transition to the confession which each Christian will have made in baptism. The baptism will not have saved one as a son of God; but because he is saved, a son of God will have been baptised.

The **TWENTY-SEVENTH VERSE** contains the only explicit mention of baptism in this book. Baptism in the New Testament invariably speaks of a radical personal commitment requiring a decisive “No!” to one’s former way of life and an equally emphatic “Yes!” to Christ the Lord. Thus, we boldly proclaim “one Lord, one Faith, one baptism” [cf. **EPHESIANS 4:5**]. The verse does not provide us with a theology of baptism, but it likely refers to baptism which even at that early stage was well developed. By the late Second Century the baptismal process involved ten steps.

1. **Catechesis** – involving a period of intense instruction in the rudiments of the Christian Faith, a probationary period that sometimes lasted several years.
2. **Fasting and prayer** – baptism was often performed on Easter eve, and so the forty days prior to this event was dedicated to rigorous spiritual exercises, especially fasting, prayer and the reading of Scripture.
3. **Renunciation** – at the point of baptism the candidate was called upon to renounce the devil and all his pomp. Facing westward he would proclaim, “I renounce thee, O Satan, and all thy works.” Then he would spit three times in the direction of darkness, signifying a complete break with the powers of evil and their former claim on his life.
4. **Credo** – turning toward the sunrise he would say, “And I embrace thee, O Lord Jesus Christ.” At this point the one to be baptised would recite a baptismal confession of faith, sometimes presented in the form of questions and answers (“Do you believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?” The answer was “Credo,” “I believe” in English.
5. **Disrobing** – The candidate would remove all clothing and enter naked into the baptismal waters.
6. **Immersion** – An order of godly women known as widows or deaconesses assisted the women candidates, while the men were immersed by deacons and elders assigned to this task.
7. **New robe** – Coming up out of the baptismal waters, the candidates were invested in a new robe symbolising “putting on” Christ in newness of life.
8. **Anointing** – After all the candidates had come through the waters of baptism, each would then be anointed with oil symbolising the presence of the Holy Spirit with them.
9. **Laying on of hands** – This act represented a sealing and blessing given to each newly baptised Christian. It also connoted a kind of unilateral commissioning of every baptised believer to go forth from the baptism as a sent-forth witness for Christ and for His truth.
10. **The Lord’s Supper** – It was the universal practise of early Christians that only those properly baptised should partake of the Lord’s Table. Thus their first communion often occurred at an Easter sunrise service when the newly baptised Christians joined the other members of the congregation around the Lord’s Table to celebrate the presence of the Risen Christ.

I am not arguing that these particular and individual steps can be supported by appeal to Scripture; nevertheless, it remains that in baptism each son of God openly puts on Christ the Lord. We are baptised into Christ and baptised into His death. We are united with Him in baptism and we have died with Christ that we may live with Him [cf. **ROMANS 6:1-10**].

For the early Christians, baptism was no afterthought, but a deliberate act of dying to the past that he or she might ever after be alive to the Risen Christ. Baptism was the frontier between two worlds, between two entirely different modes of existence, between life and death. Being a Christian was risky business and baptism marked the son of God before all mankind. Baptism was more than an initiatory rite of passage; it was a decisive transition from an old way of human life to a new way. Baptism for the early believers was an act of radical obedience in which a specific renunciation was made and a specific promise was given. Baptism involved a willingness “not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake” [PHILIPPIANS 1:29].

The vital point necessary to understanding the **TWENTY-SEVENTH VERSE** is summed up in an old adage which says “any text out of context is pretext.” The **TWENTY-EIGHTH VERSE** has become a battleground in recent days. The words of the verse have frequently been wrestled from their context to make a political or ideological statement by various groups who appear intent on promoting their own particular agenda. If we will grasp the meaning of the verse as the Apostle intended it to be understood, we must understand it in the context in which it is found. Paul is arguing for the unity of the Faith, a unity that is pictured through the fact that each individual member of the Body will have clothed himself or herself with Christ. In the Apostolic view, there is to be unqualified submission to Christ as Lord within the Body of Christ. There is to be absolute reliance upon Christ as Saviour within the Body of Christ. To deny either of these truths is to deny that He has set us free.

The word *baptízo* means “to dip” or “to immerse.” A closely related word *bápto* means “to dip” or “to dye.” As part of the metaphor embraced by clothing oneself with Christ, Paul may well have regarded baptism as analogous to the dyeing of clothing. As one commentator puts the issue:

“When a person is dipped in the bath of baptism, he comes out a changed man: his former colour disappears, he comes out the colour of Christ. Whether the person before dipping was a Jew or a Gentile, a slave or a free man, a man or a woman, no longer matters.”²

Baptism does not effect this transformation. Baptism bears witness to a prior and deeper change, a change brought about through the shed blood of the Lamb of God. Baptism is the act which validates corporately what has already happened individually in regeneration. Therefore, we could summarise the argument which is presented in the **TWENTY-EIGHTH VERSE** according to the words written in one commentary:

“As far as your being joined to Christ Jesus is concerned, there is no difference between how this takes place for Jews and Gentiles, for slaves and free men, for males and females; you are all just like one person in being joined closely to Christ Jesus.”³

DISTINCTION IS ELIMINATED IN THE CHURCH — The remainder of the message must of necessity focus on the **TWENTY-EIGHTH VERSE** as we make application of the truth already discovered. A subtle statement summarises the import of the verse as we note that **WHILST DISTINCTIVENESS IS MAINTAINED IN THE CHURCH, DISTINCTION IS ELIMINATED.**

² J. Bligh, Galatians, **Galatians** (London: St. Paul Publications, 1969) p. 324

³ D. C. Arichea and E. A. Nida, **A Translator's Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Galatians** (London: UBC, 1976) p. 85

The three pairs of opposites which are listed represent the fundamental cleavages within all human existence: ethnicity, economic status and gender. Race, money and sex are primal powers in human life. The very propagation of the human race is dependent upon the distinction between male and female. While slavery is a gross perversion of God's material blessing, the ability to work hard, invest wisely and plan carefully is essential to the wellbeing of any economic order. The rich cultural and ethnic diversity of humanity has inspired some of the best literature of the ages, some of the greatest music, some of the finest art. Yet each of these spheres of human creativity are degraded and marred because of sin.

Nationality and ethnicity are corrupted by pride. Material blessing has been corrupted by greed. Sexuality is corrupted by lust. This result of our fallen condition has led to the chaotic pattern of exploitation and self-destruction which marks the human story throughout all history and to this very day. Outside of Christ the primal forces represented by these three opposites are controlled and manipulated by the fallen spirits of the universe [cf. GALATIANS 4:3, 9 *stoicheîa tou kósmou* which are *ptōchê stoicheîa*].

All who are sons of God through faith in Christ the Lord are freed from the power of these evil principles. A new standard and pattern of life now distinguishes the baptised community which is yet in the world but not of it. Distinguishing qualities no longer are important for entrance into the Church. All Christians alike have received Christ by faith, being transformed by His Holy Spirit. All Christians alike are to have submitted to the rite of baptism, confessing that He is Master. Within the Church all alike are to be received as full participants in the grace of God. Within the church we are empowered by the Spirit to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ" [GALATIANS 6:2].

Paul writes that there is "neither Jew nor Greek." At the time of Paul's writing there was a deep division between the two cultures. The division was cultural in many respects, but the deep feeling (at least from the Jewish perspective) arose from the religious aspect of this division. The Gentile was uncircumcised and was therefore no child of Abraham. The Gentile had neither the Law nor the ceremonies. The Gentile was not of the Covenant. This barrier has now been broken down in Christ [cf. EPHESIANS 2:11-18]. Jews and Gentiles now share the same Table of the Lord. Because of the exaggerated importance of race in our world we rightly extend this statement to deny the significance of all racial barriers within the Body of Christ.

Social status is a second example Paul employs, for there is neither "slave nor free." This did not deny the fact of such distinctive social standings in society; it merely affirmed that such distinction is of no significance for acceptance within the Body of Christ. All members of the Body were to receive one another as members of the same Family of God regardless of social standing. When this is practised, the power of distinction is forever broken. Slaves and free are treated equally as brothers and sisters within the church. On this pattern the ideal church should be composed of members from all strata of society: wealthy and poor; educated and uneducated, short haired and long haired; labour and management.

As an illustration of these first two distinctions which no longer have a place within the baptised Community of Faith, I am reminded of a story from the Antebellum South. Mose' was a slave on the plantation belonging to a man, who though considered a "good master" was nevertheless a lost man. Mose' was always joyful in spite of his situation in life and his treatment within the prevailing culture of that day as an inferior being. The old slave rejoiced in his freedom in Christ and his master took note of his joy.

One day the master asked what he would need to do so that he could have the joy he witnessed in old Mose's life.

“Marse,” said the old black man, “you gotta’ come down to the hog pen wid me and kneel in de mud.”

The master protested that he could do no such thing as it was beneath his station to go down to the hog pen and there kneel in the muck.

Nevertheless, day-after-day the master entreated the slave for the secret of his joy; and day-after-day he received the same answer. God was working in the life of that wealthy slave owner, however, for one day he called the old slave aside and said, “Mose’, I’ll do anything if I can only have the joy you possess. Let’s go down to the hog pen. I’m ready to kneel in the mire with you.”

“O, Marse, ain’t no need to waller in that mud,” said the old slave. “You just gotta’ be willing to humble yo’self ‘fore the Lawd.”

So it is that all alike who will enjoy the grace of God must relinquish reliance on culture or social standing, relying instead on Christ and His grace. In the church there is no longer room for temporal distinction in order to enter into the life of Christ or to enjoy the full privilege of a son of God. All that He offers is extended to each individual alike.

Paul also used the example of gender, stating that there is neither “male nor female.” Paul’s teaching stands in marked contrast to commonly accepted patterns of privilege and prejudice in the ancient world. Women were considered inferior both within Jewish culture and within Greek culture. Hellenistic men regularly thanked God for allowing them to be born as human beings and not as beasts, as Greeks and not as Barbarians, as citizens and not as slaves, as men and not as women.

Jewish men commonly recited a prayer each morning which stated: “I thank thee, God, that thou hast not made me a slave nor a woman nor a Gentile dog.” Josephus reflected the Jewish point of view concerning gender when he wrote, “Woman is inferior to man in every way.” Rabbi Judah ben Elai incorporated a similar pattern of “benedictions” that in slightly revised form can still be found in the Jewish cycle of morning prayers.

“Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast not made me a foreigner.”

“Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast not made me a slave.”

“Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast not made me a woman.”

Should a Jewish woman desire to address the Lord, she was encouraged to pray, “Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast made me according to thy will.”

So far as entrance into the Church and participation in the grace of God are concerned, gender is not a factor. Men and women are to be treated as members of the same family. Sexual distinction has no place within the Body of Christ in so far as acceptance of one another is concerned. Since race, economic condition and sex are clearly proscribed as conditions for acceptance as full members of the Body of Christ, the only permissible distinctions are those of function. This sole remaining issue of distinction has become the battleground for feminists and evangelical theologians who appear to be driven more by desire to be acceptable to the world than to be true to the Word of God.

Baptism is a great testimony to the grace of God. Those dear Chinese saints whom I baptised in my former church received the same baptism which I received. John D. Rockefeller submitted to the same baptism that I received when he confessed Christ as Lord. My beloved wife received the same baptism I received. In this act we each have entered into the life of the Body and confessed that salvation is all of grace. Amen.

DISTINCTIVENESS IS MAINTAINED IN THE CHURCH — Despite the fact that distinguishing qualities are unrelated to clothing ourselves with Christ, differences of nationality, status and sex nevertheless continue. The Apostle to the Gentiles still recognised the presence of Jews and of Greeks [cf. 1 CORINTHIANS 10:32]. Paul himself did not cease to be a Jew when he became a Christian. Although he was willing to exercise his claim to be a Jew on occasion, Paul never surrendered his freedom in Christ in doing so. A Jew remains a Jew and a Gentile remains a Gentile, though in the church each is received as a son of God. Because we are saved does not mean that our race or cultural background in life changes, though in Christ we are to be received as full participants in the life of the Body.

Paul never argued for the abolition of slavery. He sent Onesimus back to Philemon with no plea that he should be set free [cf. PHILEMON 8-17]. Nowhere does Paul treat slavery as a divinely ordained institution; however, remember that the temporal state was not his primary concern. He was concerned with the situation within the Church of the Living God. Paul waged no campaign to eradicate slavery from the Roman Empire. Instead he simply gave instructions on how to carry out assigned work duties with appropriate Christian attitudes in the then-existing institution of slavery. True enough, Paul's teaching certainly contained the seed of destruction for the institution of slavery among the people of God, but elimination of a social evil was not his primary concern.

As a significant aside I point out that the present emphasis by contemporary theologians upon the church as an agent of social change is unsupported by the Word of God. Paul did not agitate for social change; instead, he taught that we are not to be overly concerned with the social situation. Those who argue that the church is actively to demonstrate against social evils or to engage in political action find no comfort in the teachings of the Word of God. They have jettisoned the power of the Faith for a momentary gain of no eternal significance. We are to permit no distinction within the church, though we must recognise the distinctiveness of our individual situations.

The third distinction which is said to have been eliminated is the focus of the message because it is the source of much political turmoil within the Body of Christ today. Some fellow believers echo contemporary theologians in stating that since slavery has now been abolished in light of a fuller understanding of Christian love and brotherhood, so also all gender-related differentiation should now be eliminated in the roles of men and women both in the family and within the Church. In response to this assertion I point to an aspect of the language Paul uses.

Though it appears that sex is intended as a temporal condition [cf. MATTHEW 22:30], Paul nevertheless prohibited women from exercising authority as overseers, elders or pastors in this present age [cf. 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-10; 1 TIMOTHY 2:12-15; 3:1-7]. This prohibition is clearly gender based. The first two couplets in the TWENTY-EIGHTH VERSE are distinct from the third. The sentence literally reads: "neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male **and** female" (*οὐκ ἥνι Joudaïos oudè Hállēn, οὐκ ἥνι doûlos oidè eleútheros, oík ἥνι ársev kai thêlu*).

This slight variation in structure no doubt reflects the words found in GENESIS 1:27: "He made them male and female," recalling the original act of creation of mankind in which God created gender as constitutive for the human condition. The difference between male and female, unlike that between master and slave or between Jew and Gentile, is grounded in creation itself. The distinction is essential for propagation of the human family. Note especially that this distinction was introduced by God before the Fall and that this was prior to the entrance of sin and before the curse upon all mankind.

Modern feminist theologians are not the first to interpret the “neither male and female” formula of **GALATIANS 3:28** as a call for eliminating gender distinctiveness. The unique aspects of masculine and feminine personhood were rejected by the Gnostics early in the history of the churches. In the Gospel of Thomas, a Gnostic collection of “Jesus sayings,” the following apocryphal dialogue between Jesus and His disciples is related.

“Jesus saw little children who were receiving their mother’s milk. He said to his disciples,
‘These children who are receiving milk are like the ones who enter the kingdom.’ They asked him,
‘Shall we, too, being children enter the kingdom?’ Jesus said to them,
‘When you make the two one,
When you make the inside as the outside,
When you make the top as the bottom
When you make male and female into a single, so the male is not male and the female is not female,
When you make eyes an eye,
When you make the hand a hand,
When you make the foot a foot,
An image, an image —
Then you will enter!’”⁴

In this saying the elimination of sexual distinctiveness is a prerequisite for salvation. What circumcision was for the Judaisers of Galatia, gender reversal became for the Gnostic heretics. To Gnostics, creation and the material world were inherently evil. Since sexuality was an obvious carrier of this fallen condition, it had to be reversed or neutralised in order to achieve release from the constricting “prison house of matter.” Against this deviant view of matter, orthodox Christians confessed, “I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” Now contemporary radical feminists have reached back to the Gnostics for their own revisionist formulations of the Christian Faith.

It is only through wresting **GALATIANS 3:28** from its context that anyone can discover a manifesto for liberation theology—feminist or otherwise. It is only through importing an alien ideology derived from other than divine sources that one can make **GALATIANS 3:28** say something other than what it says concerning our unity in Christ. Whether or not women should serve in any and every position must be determined from some source other than our text, and those who argue otherwise must be capable of addressing those texts which clearly speak on women’s service within the church. **GALATIANS 3:28** can be used neither as evidence nor as counter evidence in this debate.

In this verse Paul did say that there is a unity in the body of Christ. By the words of this verse Paul did say that there is an equality of access to salvation through faith in Jesus as Master of life. Paul set his readers free from the thought that they must become Jews in order to be saved. Circumcision is unnecessary for salvation. Paul has shown that in this present age, inaugurated through the death and resurrection of Christ, a new reality has come to light. That new reality speaks of equality in entrance into the Faith and equality in acceptance within the Faith.

⁴ Ray Summers, **The Secret Sayings of the Living Jesus** (Waco: Word, 1968) pp. 106, 108

One well-recognised scholar has summed up the issue quite nicely in these words.

“All those who have heard and received the Good News of freedom in Christ are now called to a new pattern of life within the baptised community. The old distinctions have not been eradicated any more than the soul of a new believer has been ripped out of his body. We still live in the tension between the No Longer and the Not Yet. We still affirm the goodness of God’s created order even while we recognise that it has been horribly marred by sin. Yet in Christ Jesus we have been called out of darkness into His marvellous light. This means that Christians have been liberated from the demonic forces of racism, materialism and sexism. This has happened not through assimilation to the politically correct agenda of the world about us, but rather through the inner transformation and liberation brought about through the sending of God’s Holy Spirit into our hearts.”⁵

Earlier in this third chapter Paul had shown that Jesus Christ was the true seed (singular) of Abraham [see **GALATIANS 3:16**]. Through our union with Christ we have now inherited this privileged status. This happened, not through procreation but through regeneration, not by our goodness but by God’s grace, not by works of the Law but through faith alone. Paul now shows what it means for those who have been liberated from the curse of the Law and the bondage of sin to enter into the new estate as heirs according to the promise [**GALATIANS 3:29**].

All my words are meaningless if you are still outside the grace of God. Though you may have submitted to a rite, you must know that divorced from faith in the Living Christ all rites are meaningless and futile. The call of this message is for each of us to ensure that we have placed our faith in Christ as Master of life and as Saviour. To those held in thralldom to religion, listen to the words the Apostle penned after our text.

“What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir” [**GALATIANS 4:1-7**].

To all outside of Christ and under divine condemnation God offers eternal life in Christ Jesus the Lord. “If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, ‘Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.’ For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” [**ROMANS 10:9-13**].

Our call to each alike is to be saved, entering into the Family of God. Our plea is that each would become a child of God and a son of God through faith in the Lord Christ. Amen.

⁵ Timothy George, **The New American Commentary: Galatians** (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994) p. 292

Why would any pastor address an issue considered by most to be controversial? Why would a pastor run the risk of alienating members of the flock, denominational leaders and even the goodwill of society?

Pastors are appointed by God to their ministry and to their charge. Ultimately it is to Christ that the Pastor must give an answer for his service. If he has proved true to the divine charge which he received when appointed to sacred duties, he will be commended by Him who appointed that pastor. If he has proved false to the One who appointed him, he shall suffer loss and eternal censure. Therefore, an awesome responsibility rests upon the pastor.

Nevertheless, should not a pastor endeavour to conduct his ministry without controversy? Unfortunately, some issues are brought into the church and the pastor is compelled to fulfil the charge given through the Apostle. “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” [2 TIMOTHY 4:2-5].

Because he loves the flock the pastor is constrained to warn against embracing error and to provide sound instruction which will teach the people how to live in order to please the Lord our God. Because he loves the flock the pastor will address those errors which threaten the flock even though his words may carry the risk of offending some. Moreover, because the pastor loves most deeply the One who appointed him to his office he must prove faithful and obedient to His revealed Word. The pastor will always know that error which is ignored can lead to yet graver error that ultimately threatens the health of the Body.

Until Christ returns, or until He calls me home, I assure you that I will continue to address issues of great sensitivity within society and within the Christian community in this day. I do so knowing that though I no longer represent the majority within evangelicalism in this day, in my doctrinal persuasion I am the one standing in the historic lineage of the Apostles. The weight of historic evangelicalism lies with me in my stance. Knowing the increasing social and political pressure for the churches to accede to positions generally acceptable to the larger society, I am compelled to fulfil my pastoral duty by warning against transgression of the revealed Word of God. I do this through providing sound instruction based upon the Word of God. The churches receiving this instruction are responsible to obey the One whom they worship ... and this obedience is to be in love.

I do not ask that any of you accept my words uncritically. I do ask that you think. I do ask that you weigh the words of Scripture. If you disagree with my words today, I would ask that you discern whether you disagree with God’s Word or whether you in fact only disagree with a misogynist dinosaur. If you are a Christian, you must ensure that you are not in opposition to the Lord your God. If, however, you are nominally religious, it does not much matter what you think concerning the Word of God since you are under divine condemnation until you submit to the Risen Christ as Master of life.