

The Beautiful Assurances of Grace: Understanding Our Identity in Christ

There's something powerful about understanding who we are in Christ. Not just knowing facts about salvation, but grasping the depth of what it means to be fully accepted, completely loved, and permanently secure in God's family. The book of Galatians provides us with remarkable clarity on this truth, reminding us that we are saved by grace and we also live by grace.

The Law's Limited But Important Role

Before we can fully appreciate grace, we need to understand the purpose of the law. Many believers struggle with this tension: What do we do with Old Testament commands? Are they still relevant? Do we need to obey them to be fully accepted by God?

The answer is both freeing and clarifying. The law served three crucial but limited purposes in God's salvation plan.

First, it provided a **restraining force** for humanity. Early in history, we see that humanity without any restraint lived horribly. Wickedness became the norm. God introduced His commands to provide boundaries, to keep people from living completely without moral direction.

Second, the law had a **revelatory function**. It reveals God's holiness while simultaneously exposing our sinfulness. The law shows us the highest standards flowing from God's perfect character, and in doing so, it creates self-awareness. We see clearly: God is holy, and we are not. We need a Savior. The law can tell us how sinful we are, but it cannot save us. It points us to our need for Jesus.

Third, the law had a **provisional purpose**. It was designed to last until the promised Messiah came. The law was our guardian until Christ arrived, protecting us until we could be made right with God through faith.

Growing Up Spiritually

Here's an important truth: While we have no performance requirements under the law because Jesus fulfilled them all, we would be foolish to ignore the wisdom and moral benefit that Old Testament commands provide.

Think about how our perspective on our parents' rules changes as we mature. When we're young, their rules seem oppressive and unnecessary. But as we grow up, especially if we have children of our own, we realize our parents weren't so foolish after all. In fact, we find ourselves seeking their wisdom.

The same is true spiritually. When we mature in Christ, we don't eliminate Old Testament wisdom. We learn from the truth still found in those commands and seek to benefit from their guidance. Grace doesn't position us to live with less wisdom but encourages us to pursue it more.

Anyone who tries to limit or discard God's law to make life more manageable has some spiritual growing up to do. We don't live up to the law for salvation, but we ought to learn from it for sanctification.

The Goal of Salvation: Divine Adoption

Justification is the legal judgment that declares us not guilty because of Jesus' sacrifice. But God wanted more for us than to be pardoned prisoners. He wanted us in His family. So He adopts us.

Divine adoption is more than a metaphor. It is the actual goal of salvation.

Consider the human experience of adoption. Parents who adopt go through waiting periods, investigative requirements, and legal hurdles. All of these challenges fortify their resolve. They want this child. They pursue this child. They pay the price for this child. And when the adoption is complete, that child is fully theirs, fully loved, with no distinction from biological children.

This is exactly how God feels about you. He pursued you. He paid the ultimate price for you through Christ. And now you are fully His. You are a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Do you know how much He loves you?

Baptism: Putting On New Clothes

Baptism is an outward picture of an inward reality. When someone is baptized, they are taken under the water, symbolizing death to their old sinful life. Then they are raised up out of the water, demonstrating resurrection to a brand new spiritual life.

The Bible describes this baptism experience as putting on new clothes, specifically putting on Christ. This imagery carries three powerful implications.

First, baptism demonstrates Christ as our primary identity. Just like a team jersey identifies which team you belong to, baptism is putting on the jersey of Jesus. You are identifying yourself with Christ. When God looks at you, He sees Jesus and recognizes you are on team righteous.

Second, baptism illustrates how close of a connection we have with Christ. Clothes are kept closer to us than any other possessions. We rely on them to cover us and shield us from exposure. Baptism is a confession that we are clothed in Christ. He is our covering. Our life is hidden in His holiness so that we are shielded from all our sinful shame.

Third, baptism initiates our becoming imitators of Christ. It is an open public declaration of allegiance. Our baptism says, "I'm an unashamed follower of Jesus. I want my life to emulate my Savior. I want to live like Jesus lived."

When you put on the jersey of Jesus and pursue a life of imitating Christ, you'll never experience a day of disappointment following His example.

Unity in Christ: Our Undivided Community

One of the most radical statements in Scripture declares: "There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female, for you are all one in Christ."

This doesn't mean differences between people don't exist. There are significant differences between cultures, backgrounds, and genders. The point is that all of these differences cannot and must not be preferred over our commonality in Christ.

We ought to be so close to Jesus and so close to one another that letting any differences divide us is unthinkable. Evidence of living by grace is when Jesus is so prioritized that His identity is the only one that matters to us.

There is no political affiliation, no cultural preference, no social status that can separate those who are focused and standing on the only thing that truly matters in this life: where you stand with Jesus.

Where Do You Stand?

The most important question you'll ever answer is this: Where do you stand with Jesus?

Are you living in the beautiful assurances of grace? Do you know deep in your soul that God loves you? Are you unashamedly wearing the identity of Christ everywhere you go? Are there any competing interests above Jesus in your life?

If you've never received Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, the invitation is simple. Tell Jesus the truth: "I'm a sinner. I know I'm not righteous. But I also know Jesus is righteous. He paid my sins penalty. I put my trust in Christ. Jesus, come into my heart and life."

He will change you. He will lead you on the greatest adventure of your life.

The blessed assurances of grace confirm our worthy trust in a worthy God. You are adopted. You are clothed in Christ. You are united with all believers. You are His.

Scripture References from the Sermon

Directly Referenced or Quoted:

1. **Galatians 3:19-25** - Main text discussing the purpose of the law
2. **Galatians 3:26-29** - Children of God through faith, baptism, unity in Christ
3. **Galatians 4:1-7** - Adoption as children and heirs of God
4. **Genesis 6:6** - "The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on earth and his heart was deeply troubled"
5. **Leviticus 11:44-45** (implied) - "I, the Lord your God, am holy"
6. **Matthew 5:17-19** - Jesus came to fulfill the law, not abolish it
7. **Galatians 3:21** - No conflict between God's law and God's promises
8. **Galatians 3:27** - United with Christ in baptism
9. **Galatians 3:28** - No longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female
10. **Romans 10:13** (alluded to) - "Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"

Relevant Verses Aligned with Main Themes:

Grace and Salvation:

- **Ephesians 2:8-9** - Saved by grace through faith
- **Titus 3:5** - Not by works of righteousness
- **Romans 3:20** - No one is justified by works of the law

Adoption Theme:

- **Romans 8:15-17** - Spirit of adoption, crying "Abba, Father"
- **Ephesians 1:5** - Predestined for adoption through Jesus Christ
- **1 John 3:1** - Called children of God

Baptism:

- **Romans 6:3-4** - Baptized into Christ's death and resurrection
- **Colossians 2:12** - Buried with him in baptism

Unity in Christ:

- **Ephesians 4:4-6** - One body, one Spirit, one Lord
- **1 Corinthians 12:13** - All baptized into one body

Law and Grace:

- **Romans 3:23-24** - All have sinned, justified by grace
- **Romans 7:7** - Law reveals sin