

Mixed Metaphors

"We'll cross that bridge when pigs fly, but until then, let's keep our ducks in a row."

"Life's a rollercoaster, so grab the bull by the horns."

"We made lemonade out of lemons, and now we're riding the gravy train!"

From Slaves (and little children)

A mixed metaphor (vss. 1-2)

Israel is a child waiting to grow up to receive the promise, under the guardianship of the law.

Israel is like a slave, trying to please the master through obedience to the law.

The subject moves to “we” (vs. 3)

Who was a slave? We were.

Elementary principles of the world (vs. 3)

What were we a slave to? The elementary principles of the world.

The Greek word literally means things placed in a row, like ABC's. It means basics.

It certainly refers to the Jewish law, because of the context. It seems to reach past that to any form of imperfect, rudimentary pagan teaching due to vs. 8.

The lies of spiritual slavery

1. God is not a loving father, he is a distant taskmaster. You are under a rigorous “guardian” who is concerned mostly with your performance.
2. You are not a beloved royal child; you are an orphan.

False identity and toxic shame¹

Toxic shame is a concept from Christian counseling and psychology that explains why we don't see ourselves as God does, what impairments result, and how to work through that to growth.

¹ A great reference to learn about the intersection of emotional health and Christianity is book “Voice of the Heart” by Chip Dodd.

To Sons

The Gospel gives us a new identity

Born of a woman – taking our likeness and fulfilling our duty

Born under the law – keeping not only the ABC’s of the law, but also the differential calculus

To redeem those under the law – we are bought by Christ

“Abba, father!” (vs. 6)

This is what Jesus cried out at the cross.

The Holy Spirit reminds us of the cross and our true identity.

The shame of the cross

What’s your true identity?

Pride – I am so great that God is obligated to love and bless me. Other people don’t receive God’s blessing because of their sin, their choices, and their failings.

Toxic shame – I am unvalued because of my sin, my choices, and failings. Deep down I believe I am unworthy of love because of who I am. I try to control and manage what people think of me.

Sonship – By faith in Christ, I am a child of God apart from anything I have done. I am more loved than I could ever imagine, and I am a worse sinner than I have ever comprehended.

Reminding ourselves and each other of the Gospel

Romans 12:10 “Outdo one another in showing honor.”

Questions for Study and Reflection

1. If you’re doing this in a group, come up with some funny mixed metaphors of your own.
2. What does spiritual slavery and childhood look like, according to this passage? What lies do you believe?
3. How does this passage establish and remind us of our true identity in Christ?
4. Do you have the Spirit in your life? Does he remind you of the Gospel?