Gal. 3:27-29; Eph. 4:1-6: A Church Without Division? I. False Teachings Exposed II. The Proper Source of Unity

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who belongs to the church? What is the source of church unity? Today as we return to Gal. 3 we find the unity of the church put on display for us. But what should be one of the most encouraging verses on church unity has been twisted by many. Gal. 3:28 is one of the most misused verses in this book. By far, v. 28 is the most common verse that is wrongly applied by many to defend sinful actions as we will see. But even though this verse may be twisted by many, it remains a source of great encouragement to us today! Although the wicked may twist this teaching, the truth is that in Christ we are made one! So this evening we consider this theme: Jesus Christ unites the church in Himself.

**I. False Teachings Exposed**

In our first point we will consider the false teachings that have twisted this verse. One of the responsibilities of the church is to defend the truth against heresy. One of the ways that wicked people give the appearance of authority to their wicked actions is by wrongly quoting the Scriptures. Usually by lifting a verse out of its context or by reading their own ideas into the text, the Bible verse is altered to say something that is contrary to its intended teaching. So false teaching is defended with a wrong application of this verse. We find this in three key areas of life. The home, the church and in society a large. First of all, the structure of the home is attacked by those who misapply v. 28. The reasoning goes like this- since Paul says that there is neither male nor female, that means that there are no distinctions or different callings within the home. So the feminist would say- there is no distinction between the roles of male or female- meaning that husbands and wives are equal in authority and in every role. So the concept of headship and husband leadership is thrown out the window in their view. Woman can be the leaders in the home- men should submit to their wives. But in more resent days, this verse has been used to undermine the entire concept of gender. Since Paul says that there is neither male nor female, then gender must be a fluid thing. Men can become women if the want- and woman can become men- because Paul says that male and female distinctions are not real. This verse has also been used in support of gay or homosexual behavior and marriage. You see, they say, even Paul was in support of gay marriage because he says that male and female do not exist. No such thing as male and female- so gender does not matter. You can marry and be with anyone you want. Now to be clear- this is not what Paul is saying! The Bible does not contradict itself- you have to read what the entire Bible says about marriage and gender and the roles within the home.

The second area that this verse is used to teach error is that of the church. It is wrongly stated- that since there is no such thing as male and female, then there should be no distinctions or restrictions at church as well. In other words, Paul must be opening the offices of the church to women as well since he is writing that there is no such thing as male and female within the church. So this verse is used by liberals and feminist to defend the concept of women in office and serving in leadership within the church. Here again, we must read the rest of the Scriptures where we find in Paul’s letter to Timothy that women are not to have authority over men; or to speak or preach at church- and that the offices of the church are reserved for godly men. The third and final area in which this verse is misapplied is in the area of society as a whole. It goes like this, since Paul said there this neither slave nor free, that must mean that God does not recognize any social structure. In other words, this verse gives us the right to throw off any and all authority. Social anarchy would follow- since I do not need to acknowledge any state or government- nor do I need to be a part of any church or any other institution. It is just me and my Jesus- I do not need to acknowledge any other structure or authority. But they forget that Paul also wrote Romans 13 which calls for submission to all authority since authority comes from God. So as we close this first point, before we can get to what this verse is teaching, we have to be willing to defend the truth from heresy. Becoming a Christian does not wipe out your gender. Men are still men and woman are still women. Becoming a Christian does not mean that you have no other responsibility. Distinctions still remains. This verse does not call for anarchy. Men still have a unique calling and responsibility to lead as the head of the home and within the church as well. Social structure and submission to authority still remains. So if this verse is not advocating the throwing off of all structure, what is this verse saying?

**II. The Proper Source of Unity**

Well, in our second point we see that Paul is making a bold and even shocking claim. He is advocating the acceptance of all withing the one body of Christ. Remember that the content of this book has centered on the Jew/Gentile debate. Were the Gentiles welcomed into the church as they are- or did they need to become Jews first and then welcomed into the church? As we saw over the last weeks- it was not their submission to Jewish rites, rituals and laws that secured their acceptance by God! No, they were welcomed as children of Abraham because they shared the faith of Abraham. So in v. 28, Paul continues to focus on the identity of the Christian as a member of Christ’s church. In other words, church unity is the correct application of this verse! Not the blending of roles, but the tearing down of walls of separation. As Paul says in Eph. 2:14, the wall of hostility has been brought down. The division between Jew and Gentile has been turned to rubble- the wall that separated the Gentile nations and kept them out of the temple has been removed in Christ! To say this another way, there is no place for racism within the church! There is no Jew or Gentile- no American or Chineze Christian. No, we are all Christians first and foremost! United and joined to the one body- united to Christ our head! Racism or elitism cannot stand within the church- we are all on equal footing. We all stand together today- no matter your background. We are all sinners who have been saved by grace through faith in our Savior, Jesus Christ! Can you imagine a wall down the center here? What if you were divided by gender- or rank. Imagine the outrage if we attended a church that said- white men sit over there. Slaves and women on the other side. Praise God for the unity of the church- that we are all welcomed as one! Male and female- Jew and Gentile, rich and poor- we are all anointed as prophets, priests and kings!

Even when it comes to male and female, there is no superiority here! Now we have to be clear, there are distinctions that remain. We have different callings and responsibility, but there are no divisions or second class citizens. In God’s sight, your gender does not make your more or less important! There are no second cousins twice removed in God’s family! We are all one in the Jesus Christ! The officers of the church and the heads of the home are not superior to their family or to the church. Rather, they are called to be servants who equip! Again- this verse is teaching that we are all needed and that we are all equal in the sight of God! Each part of the body has their role to fill! We are all dearly loved and welcomed as church! Slave or free- rich or poor- male or female- Jew or Gentile- we are all one body in Him! This is the heart of the doctrine of the Holy, Catholic Church. There is one church- one bride- one body of Christ! Unity for mankind is possible- and will only be found within the church! Church unity is a work of the Spirit- it is our birthright! As we read in Eph. 4, there is one faith, one Lord, one baptism. One body and one Spirit! Being a part of the church not only speaks to your relationship to God, but also your relationship to your spiritual brothers and sisters.

Getting back to our initial question, this verse tells us who is a member of the church. Who belongs to the body of Christ? The answer is clearly found in v. 27- all who are baptized into Christ! Who is excluded? No one is excluded based on their heritage, gender, legal status or position. In the OT, the mark of the covenant was reserved for Jews and it was reserved for men. Only male Jews could be circumcised. Now, baptism is applied to all- male and female- Jew and Gentile. We all share in the sign! All are welcomed- and all are one in Christ! Just a quick note on v. 27- we see that all who are baptized into Christ are to be seen as a member of His people. Children, did you know that you are a member of this church? Being baptized means that you belong to God and that you belong here! This is your church home- your spiritual family! Baptized children of believers are members of this congregation as well! So we could even add another category- young and old! The church is made up of young and old, rich and poor, slave and free, Jew and Gentile, male and female. All are one in Christ and all are welcomed as God’s child and heirs according to the promise!

To conclude, understanding this verse helps us see the unity that we possess in Christ! In referencing race, rank and gender, Paul points to the things that tend to divide in this world. But in Christ, these walls and barriers are brought down. Jesus Christ unites the church in Himself. Your age, gender, heritage, and rank matters not. Together we are all united- together in Adam we all fell into sin- and together in Christ we are made alive! Praise God for the unity we find in Jesus our Lord!