

20260412 From Slaves to Sons – Ps Bijoy

Galatians 4:1-7;17-20

This morning, Galatians will take us into what I believe is the most unburdening benefits of God's grace. God's grace, which comes to us in Jesus Christ, gives us an entirely new identity. And that new identity can be summed up by one word in our passage: adoption. Adoption is the relational side of the legal term justification. Throughout our journey through Galatians, we've been learning a lot about the doctrine of justification. The doctrine of justification – Though we are sinners and deserve God's eternal judgment, we are declared not guilty and right with God by faith alone in Christ alone (by the finished work of Christ on cross). Adoption is the relational side of justification. The doctrine of adoptions says that you're more than right with God, you're his son, his daughter, and He lavishes His love, privilege, and inheritance on you.

There is nothing in all this world that can unburden like experiencing the truth of your new identity in Christ – You're an adopted child of God. God is your Father. Listen to a theologian describes how unburdening it is to experience the truth that God is your Father. "If we could be quite sure and constantly believe that God is our Father, and that we are his sons and heirs, then we would be utterly contemptuous of the world with all its glory, righteousness, wisdom, and power, all its royal crowns and all its riches and pleasures. We would not care so much for this life, or be addicted to the world and worldly things, trusting in them when we have them, lamenting and despairing when we lose them; we would do everything with great love, humility, and patience." Nothing unburdens you from your sins, your suffering, your setbacks, and your pain like experiencing the truth that in the midst of them God is your Father and he works all of them for your good. And nothing sweetens your victories, joys, accomplishments, and privileges like knowing that they come to you from your Father who loves to celebrate them with you.

But we have a problem. Because of the sin that so easily entangles us, the accusations that the Devil speaks against us, and the lies and temptations that the world throws at us, it's incredibly difficult to experience the truth that we are not who we used to be and God is now our Father. And so in our passage this morning, Paul brings us back again to the simple truth that you are not who you used to be. Now, to experience the truth of our adoption, we are going to take our passage in two parts: who we used to be (vv. 1-3) and who we now are (vv. 4-7). Two points: A. You were slaves (v. 1-3) B. You are now sons (v. 4-7).

YOU WERE SLAVES (v. 1-3)

In Galatians 4:1-2 – The heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. That's the illustration of who we used to be, so let's try to understand it. Paul says that when the heir of a wealthy family is a child, they're functionally no different than a household slave or bond-servant, even though, in some sense, they own the whole estate. The child-heir is no different than a slave because when the heir is a child, they have handlers, tutors, managers and nannies who tell them where to go, what to do, and when to do it. Until the time appointed by his father, the child is no different from a slave – they cannot do what they want to do, go where they want to go, or enjoy their inheritance.

Let's see how Paul applies this illustration to who we used to be. Galatians 4:3 – In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. In this verse Paul applies the illustration to who we used to be. Just as an heir, when he or she is a child is no different from a slave, so when we were children, that is before we became Christians, we were enslaved to the elementary principles of this world.

The elementary principle of this world, in a word, is legalism. Some of the Galatian Christian's were formerly Jewish, enslaved to trying to measure up to God by his law, which they could never keep. Others of the Galatian Christians were formerly pagan. They were enslaved to try to appease their gods by their merits or performances. Whether you were formerly Jewish, pagan, religious, or totally irreligious, you were enslaved to try to establish an identity for yourself, measure up to God, and get in with the right people by your merit. The elementary principle of this world is the universal human tendency to judge our rightstanding with God, others, and ourselves by our own merit. You were enslaved to living this way – you couldn't do otherwise. You were without hope and without God in this world. That's who we used to be.

YOU ARE NOW SONS (v. 4-7)

Paul helps us experience who we are by first reminding us how we became sons. And that brings us to the heart of the gospel. God sent forth his Son to liberate us from the curse and slavery of the law so that we might receive adoption instead of slavery. Galatians 4:4-5 – But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. The word "redeem" means to liberate from slavery. The word "redeem" has its roots in the Exodus in the OT. Just like Moses redeemed God's people from slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt through the Exodus, God sent the true and greater liberator, the Lord Jesus Christ, to redeem us from eternal slavery to the elementary principles of this world so that we can receive adoption as God's sons. Moses risked his life to free Israel from lifelong slavery, but God sent his Son to lose his life to redeem us from eternal slavery. You're not who you once were. You were slaves, but you are now sons.

And not only did God send his Son to adopt you as his sons, God also sent his Spirit so that you can experience your sonship. The God who sent his Son to adopt you as Sons also sent his Spirit

so that you can experience the daily unburdening wonder of being God's sons. Galatians 4:6 – And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" As one scholar puts it, the Father sent his Son to give us sonship and the Father sent his Spirit into our hearts to confirm and authenticate our sonship. The idea here is similar to what Paul wrote to the Romans. Romans 8:15-16 "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!". God doesn't just want you to know that you're his adopted son, he wants you to experience his loving adoption of you everyday. So, he has sent his Spirit to confirm and assure your heart that you are his son. The Father doesn't only want you to be his son or daughter, he wants you to experience the assurance that he's your Father. A way to think about the work of the Holy Spirit in your life is that the normal Christian life is like a child walking hand in hand with their dad. He's got your hand, you've got his, and it's wonderful. But from time to time you lift your other hand crying out to be held, comforted, and assured. The dad scoops the child up in his arms, spins him around, and assures him, "I'm your dad. I love you. That's never changing." God has sent his Spirit into your heart to keep you crying out to your Father for fresh assurance of his love. Ask any time! You were a slave, but now you're sons. And because you're God's sons, no matter what you're going through today, your future is incredibly bright! When the Son of God died in your place to make you adopted sons, you became heirs not of an earthly king or queen, but of your Heavenly Father. And you won't inherit palaces, you will inherit a New Heavens and a New Earth and the whole universe will be full of his glory and you'll be there, forever, as an heir through God. You're not who you once were. You were slaves, but now you're adopted sons.