

Galatians 4:1-7 "Keep Your Sonship in Mind"

GAL 4:1-7 "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."

Our passage today comes on the heels of Paul describing the relationship we have with God which comes through faith in Christ as opposed to observing the law. And what makes this portion unique is the angle Paul takes in his argument.

At the end of chapter three Paul was showing the way in which one is justified and the special connection we have with our God where we move from being children of wrath to children of God, whereby we now enter into a child/parent relationship, if you will, with our Creator.

And the point Paul is making at the end of chapter three is that this special relationship with God is not limited to the Jews, but is now enjoyed by anyone who calls on Christ to be his Lord and Savior.

GAL 3:28-29 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

Whether Jew or Gentile a person can know the God of Abraham and be identified with Abraham in the sense that we share the same faith and look forward to the same promise of being reconciled and reunited to our Lord forever.

For many Jews this was believed to be reserved for them exclusively since their father was Abraham. And now for Paul to come along and essentially say that Gentiles have the same Father was nothing short of blasphemy to many Jews.

And this is why the Judaizers were trying to harmonize their former belief system, which they felt was meant only for Jews, with the fact that Gentiles could now have faith in the Jewish Messiah. And of course they tried to meld the two systems by forcing the Gentile believers to be circumcised, just as Abraham was.

Paul comes along and says all mankind is invited to be reunited to their God and come into this special relationship through faith in Christ whereby we are no longer seen as outsiders, but as those belonging to the family of God, whom we now identify as Father.

And as we come to chapter four Paul is continuing to make the comparison between the law and grace, and the use of the law, as he uses another analogy with the intent of highlighting what it means to be an heir of God.

GAL 4:1-2 “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.”

What Paul is saying here is that the law is designed by God to be used for the specific purpose of holding the heir in protective custody until the heir comes of age. Keep in mind that this analogy is similar to the one he’s already given in chapter three.

GAL 3:23-25 “Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.”

And so as Paul continues in chapter four he is saying that being an heir in waiting is not unlike being a slave. And the reason for this is because the heir doesn’t have all of the privileges that he will have when he comes of age.

Imagine a 16 year old receiving his dad’s estate of millions of dollars and having the freedom to do with it as he will. Once he’s spent the money buying his own skateboard park and Mazarati’s for all his friends along with traveling the world, he’s now gone through a major portion of the estate.

This is why minors are not usually given such freedom. They are given an age at which they can begin to realize the estate, which is usually an age where they are considered a little more responsible.

But the question is, what do any of these analogies that Paul is using have to do with our salvation? What's the point of discussing being an heir to an estate and yet an heir not unlike a slave?

Well, the way we need to view all of this is to understand what the estate actually is and what the inheritance actually entails. And then we need to understand the regulations which are put into place to hold us until the estate comes to be realized.

The rules and regulations which were meant to hold God's chosen, the Jews, and in a sense to set them aside until they realize the estate, is the Mosaic law. The law was used to show them what the estate is and how they can attain it. It pointed to the estate, but it only belongs to those Jews who plan on seeking the estate in the way God's word says it can be attained.

And so, God's word sets the standard, and then points to the one who has kept that standard which then leads us to what the estate or inheritance is.

The estate or inheritance that Paul is talking about here in our text is none other than Jesus Christ Himself and His Kingdom. For lack of a better analogy He is the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. He is the prize which we all seek. He is our inheritance once we have come into possession of it by faith.

And so, when Paul says that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, he is saying that as long as the Jews are continuing under the direction of the law they are bound to that law until they come of age, or until they place their faith in Christ.

He may be an heir and he may have all of the promises which the law points to in Christ, but until that time in which he places his faith in Christ, he is still like a slave who is subject to someone else. This is what Paul points out in verses 2 and 3.

GAL 4:2-3 "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."

In other words, outside of a relationship with Christ those basic principles of the world kept us in custody. They put us under the bondage of the law which in itself gave us no hope.

Now, when Paul speaks of these basic principles of the world he is probably including not only the Mosaic law, but the law which is a

part of all mankind which we instinctively know. In fact, he addresses this innate understanding which even the Gentiles are not excused from.

ROM 1:18-20 “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

Whether it's the law of Moses or the law written on the consciences of men in general, these laws are meant to direct us to the God who saves. These laws show us that we come up short of God's righteousness, and these laws lead us to the God who makes a way of appeasing the penalty of the law.

But there's a time in which the law gives way to salvation found only in God. There's a time in which we put the law aside for grace. It's at this time that the heir receives a downpayment of the inheritance. But there was an actual time in history when this inheritance was offered to the heir, when the Messiah actually came to Israel and the world.

GAL 4:4-5 “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.”

What this shows us is that God has a timetable, He always has. It is not a coincidence that Jesus Christ came when He did. From all of eternity the Son of God was to be our Savior. He was chosen by the Father for such a role. But He was chosen to fulfill God's redemptive timetable.

1PE 1:20 “He [Jesus] was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.”

To be chosen before the creation of the world means that the Son of God had counseled with the Father and Spirit before time came into being, which means that even before man was created the Son of God was chosen to be our Savior, which means God knew long before hand that we would sin and need a Savior. And Paul confirms this when writing to Titus.

TIT 1:1-2 “Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that

leads to godliness a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time,..."

This promise before the beginning of time could not have been pronounced to man since he was not yet created, which means that the promise was one which the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit had agreed upon before time began. This redemptive plan was part of the eternal decree of a Sovereign God.

And of course time began at the creation. Time is a creative product. Before the creation there was no time, only the eternal in which God lived since He transcends time. And so, when we talk about the timetable of God we are talking about a timetable which was actually established by God before time began.

And the point Paul is making is that no part of our salvation is by chance or coincidence. Just as a father puts a timetable into effect for his children to receive their inheritance, our heavenly Father has a perfect timetable which was realized when His Son came into the world to redeem us.

And so, according to verse four of our text, "when the time had fully come, (in other words when God's timetable was met), God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law,..."

Now the reason that Paul uses the expression born of a woman, born under law, he is simply stating that Jesus Christ was fully human in every sense we are human. It's assumed that Jesus was born of a virgin though Paul doesn't state here in our text.

But the main point is that since man sinned, then only a man could pay the penalty of that sin, which means the Savior also had to be a man. We've touched on this in our study on Thursday nights as we're going through the Old Testament. And we've seen where the Son of God had made appearances to men in the Old Testament.

In one such incident Abraham was out in the fields when three men approached him. He invited them for supper and evidently knew instinctively that one of the men was none other than God Himself. In fact, we're told he was the Lord.

GEN 18:1-2 "The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground."

After supper two of the men left and went down to Sodom where they later were instrumental in bringing Lot and his family out of the city. We know that those two were angels, but the third man was the Lord.

GEN 18:22 “The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD [Jehovah].”

The question then is, was the Lord, who appeared as a man before Abraham, a true man? And by the way, this appearance of God before Abraham and others in the Old Testament is known as a Theophony or a Christophony, which is a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Christ, which really answers the question as to whether or not the Son of God was a true man at His appearance before Abraham.

The answer is, no, He was not a true man at those appearances. And the reason is quite simple. He had not yet been born of a woman. To be a true human being Jesus could not claim to be a man, eligible to take our penalty for sin, unless He came into this world the same way every other human has come into this world.

Now granted, His conception was unique in that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, but He had taken on flesh and was born the same way every other baby is born. He could not claim to be the Son of man had He not been born of a woman.

But Paul then goes on to say He was born under law, which means He was born according to the laws of nature as well as being born under the same legal requirements all other men must face. And specifically He was born under the Mosaic law which He was required to obey perfectly.

And so, in every way, He was one of us. And because His eternal plan included His humanity it was all being fulfilled in the perfect timetable as Jesus was born into this world. But there was a reason for His birth as Paul continues.

He was born “to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.” (GAL 4:5)

This is the reason for His birth; to redeem us from the penalty of sin the law produces. Until the law is dealt with in our lives we cannot be reconciled to the Father and therefore cannot receive the full rights of sons.

In other words, we cannot belong to the family of God unless we have been redeemed. Now, to be redeemed is simply to be bought back. Outside of Christ our master was Satan. We belonged to our father Satan and were doomed to suffer the penalty he is to ultimately suffer and that is to be thrown into the lake of fire at the end of the age.

What Jesus Christ accomplished was to come into the world as a man and pay man's debt to God. In so doing He literally purchased us with His blood. When we receive this redemption by faith we pass from death to life; we pass from the kingdom of darkness ruled by Satan, to the kingdom of light ruled by Christ.

And this is what Paul means when he says that we have received the full rights of sons. When we place our faith in Christ we have moved from being under the direction of the law, which was designed to be our tutor to lead us to Christ, and we have now been given the downpayment of the inheritance who is Christ.

But this relationship with our God is one which is unique in the sense that no one is born into the family of God in the true sense of the word. In other words, we don't inherit eternal life simply by being born physically into this world.

This means that we by nature are outside of the family of God and must be adopted into His family. The beauty of adoption is that God seeks us to be part of His family and then gives us the legal status of being His son or daughter.

EPH 1:4-5 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will -..."

The adoption Paul speaks of is not unlike the adoption we know of today. There might be a child in Yugoslavia, for example, who has no parents and yet an American couple can go over there and adopt that child. This means that the child not only takes the name of his new parents but he also shares in every blessing a natural born child would enjoy.

There is no difference at that point in status. The adopted child shares in any inheritance, and he shares in everything that family possesses, not the least of which is the love from those parents.

The connection Paul makes to this arrangement of adoption is that despite the fact that we are not children of God by nature, He comes to us and adopts us into His family because He loves us.

And as a result of this sonship through Christ we now share in His forever family along with all of the blessings and promises given to us by our heavenly Father, including His love He lavishes on us.

That child from Yugoslavia who had no parents, can now with confidence and a new sense of belonging, call these strangers, father and mother.

And in a similar way, despite the fact that we have been estranged from God because of our sin and its penalty, we can now, with confidence in Christ, know that we have a Father who loves us and will do everything to make sure that we will spend eternity with Him.

EPH 3:12 “In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”

This is a father/son relationship which allows total access to the one who adopted us and loves us. There’s the tendency to think that somehow God is too busy or too awesome to allow us the kind of intimacy we might expect in such a relationship. And yet, this is not the case.

Our heavenly Father loves it when we come to Him. He loves it when we spend time with Him. But more than that He loves the idea that one day we will be in His presence forever. We will realize the inheritance He purchased for us through His own beloved Son whom He gave up for us.

We have the freedom and confidence to approach His throne of glory through Christ today. But there will be a day in which we stand before His throne in the glory of our Lord Jesus who purchased us and adopted us into His forever family.

This is part of our inheritance which involves a future hope. And it is a hope we should look forward to as we await the final plan of God which was planned from all of eternity, and that includes the physical return of Christ who will judge this world and will ultimately issue in the new heavens and the new earth.

ROM 8:23-25 “Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope

we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

In other words, the consummation of our relationship with our Lord is still future oriented. We have the promise today like that child who is too young to realize the entirety of his inheritance, but who is still an heir. Nothing can change that status. But when the heir receives the full inheritance what a day of rejoicing that will be.

And that’s what we have to look forward to. This world is not our home and this world is not the ultimate kingdom of God we have in store for us. In a sense, this world is only a shadow of the true inheritance to come which is why we don’t want to store our treasures here.

MAT 6:19-21 "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Paul was always storing up treasures for heaven as he understood that there was a future reward.

2TI 4:8 “Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”

This crown of righteousness is the righteousness of Christ put to our account and it is this very thing which ensures our sonship with the Father and creates a unique and intimate relationship which Paul brings out in our text.

GAL 4:6-7 “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.”

It is the Spirit of God who indwells every believer and who encourages us to pursue this relationship with our heavenly Father. And what is interesting about this is the name the Spirit of God encourages us to use as we cry out to our Father. It’s the name Abba. It’s Aramaic for daddy or papa.

It's an endearing term that children would be inclined to use. Again, this shows us the way in which God allows us to come before Him knowing that He will receive us as that doting and loving Father who is excited that we have come to Him.

But along with that personal and intimate relationship there is also that hope of what lies in store for us. Being a son or daughter of God we are also an heir. There is so much in store for us and there are so many blessings. Paul realized this and rejoiced in the blessings of God.

EPH 1:3 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."

But it's so important for us to appreciate what it is we have in Christ and to show our gratitude and thankfulness with lives of love and obedience. This is what the writer of Hebrews tells us.

HEB 12:28 "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,..."

We are children of God, we are heirs and co-heirs with Jesus Christ, and we have a Father who loves us and whom we call Abba. Don't ever think that your heavenly Father doesn't love you abundantly. Trust Him and love Him with all your heart, soul and mind. And never forget your status in Christ.

1PE 2:9 "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

We are a people who are loved by God more than we could ever realize. If you ever doubt His love for you just look to the cross; the cross He sent His only begotten Son to to buy us back so that we can be with Him forever.

And never forget, nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. May we rejoice in that truth forever more.