

## Free At Last!

**Text:** Galatians 4.1–7

**Theme:** God's Son came to adopt us as sons of God

### Introduction — Open God's Word to Galatians 4

- need us to look intently into this today so we might be strengthened in our faith
- page 1156 in your pew Bibles

### Let's hear God in His Word

Galatians 4:1-7 ESV

- 1 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything,
- 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father.
- 3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.
- 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,
- 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.
- 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
- 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

As we prepare to think on these matters, let's seek God in prayer.

### In the ancient Roman world in which Paul lived, being an heir to an inheritance was important

- if you were a natural-born heir, you could be included in the father's will
- you could be adopted into the family and then be included in father's will
- a third way was to have some special relationship with the benefactor,

### Fascinating thing I've learned is that if natural-born child, no guarantee of inheritance

- could be written out of will for any number of reasons
- however, this was only so for the natural-born child of the father
- if you were adopted into the family, you could not then, subsequently be disinherited
- legally, an adopted heir had an irrevocable inheritance
- think about that for a moment, as we consider what we've been seeing
- as well as what is before us this morning in this text

### Paul is dealing with these realities for the Christian

- none of us are natural-born sons of God; we are adopted into His family
- we saw that last week and here it continues still, in Galatians 4.1–7
- Paul draws upon real world realities and brings them home to each of us who believe
- as God's children, we have an inheritance that cannot be annulled

### Recall, as well, that Paul refers to us adopted children as "sons of God"

- this does not exclude women by virtue of only saying sons and not sons AND daughters

- rather, it exalts the status of women to that of a firstborn son's rank: an heir of God
- as Paul wrapped up chapter 3, he declares that in Christ—oh, that glorious and marvelous phrase
- that in Christ, we are sons and heirs by faith
- this truth, this reality, is sealed by our baptism—both by the Spirit and by water
- as he continues here in ch. 4, deals with three things:
- the preparation for adoption, the purchase of adoption, and the pledge of adoption

*Let's consider...*

### **I. THE PREPARATION FOR ADOPTION, VV. 1–3**

- again, Paul is using the Roman culture of his day to make this abundantly plain & clear
- a child in a wealthy family is exactly that: a child, a minor, as we would call them
- this means they have no privileges yet, beyond even the family's common slaves
- the inheritance is not theirs yet; they may not even be written into the will till of age
- the child could not make his or her own decisions
- you could not spend your inheritance any way you wished
- the household slaves were under their steward or master
- the child was under the tutelage of the slave as guardian

#### **1. No real difference**

- slave—son; effectually, little difference when son was still a child
- father would set a date, perhaps a certain age/birthday when the child would come to his own
- then he could begin to draw upon his inheritance, if he wished
- this analogy is used by Paul to refer to the Jews under the Old Covenant
- while they were still children, they were under guardians and managers, he says, v. 2

#### **2. Elemental principles of the world?**

- this phrase comes in v. 3
- Paul is speaking to his fellow Jews at this point
- okay; so we understand the guardianship, the law's role of the tutor
- but what are these elemental principles?
- the phrase refers to the A,B,Cs of their ceremonial practices under Moses' law
- the sacrifices, the ceremonies & feast days: all were understood by the Jew
- and they were basic, but they have been replaced
- therefore, the child is no longer under the bondage of this guardian
- these ceremonial laws no longer apply
- you have come of age, Paul says, thru faith in Jesus Christ
- the wonderful thing about this is that it applied to Jew & Gentile
- neither were under that law of Moses any longer
- Christ, the schoolmaster, the object of our faith has come
- He sets us free from this slavery to the law

#### **3. Prepared for adoption**

- what this means for us is this...
- God has done all that is necessary to adopt you into His family
- He gave His good & holy law to protect you, to keep you set apart
- this same law taught you that you were a sinner, by nature and by choice
- it drove you to the realization that you needed a Savior, a perfect law-keeper
- it pointed you to Christ!

- the inheritance is there for you, but not until you come to Jesus by faith
- all the ceremonies or rituals you may have been thru are there to point you to Jesus
- they cannot save you, they do not make you holy or right in God's eyes
- in fact, if you think they do, they are like a slave master, holding you in bondage
- only in Jesus can you be truly free
- and then, you become an adopted son of God, an heir by faith

*This did not come without cost, however, so let's consider...*

## **II. THE PURCHASE OF ADOPTION, VV. 4, 5**

- now, Paul switches from the minor-aged child coming into his inheritance to true adoption

### **1. Awaiting the adoption papers**

- Adam was a son of God
- if he had kept the covenant of works God made with him in garden...
- ...this would have been confirmed; his adoption completed
- but Adam did not keep that covenant and fell into sin, bringing death to us all
- Christ, however, is the only true Son of God
- even Adam, the first man, would have needed to be adopted; but not Jesus
- throughout the OT, God's people were sons of God by adoption
- yet one key thing here is this: the inheritance & full freedom of adoption wasn't theirs yet
- this is what Paul referred to in 3.23 & 25: then THE faith came, Jesus was born
- while they awaited for that promise to come, they had their tutor: the law
- the rituals, the ceremonies, the other pieces to guide them
- the priests would deal with so much in their place, especially high priest on Day of Atonement
- this was needful until THE faith came, the Messiah, their Deliverer, Jesus, the Christ

### **2. The date set by the father**

- v. 4 tells us what Paul pointed to in v. 2—the date of adoption and inheritance
- this fullness of time, the completeness of all things required—all set by God
- eternal decree of Trinity set all things in motion to bring human history to 0 A.D.
- God's people, at last, could come of age, into maturity, into their inheritance
- the fullness of time is what God decreed for Jesus to take on human flesh
- Jesus would have to accomplish all God had willed: full & complete obedience to the Law
- suffering and death on a cross, and so many other O.T. prophecies
- this is the time, set by the Father, for His children to come into their inheritance

### **3. A prophetic clock was ticking**

- since God pronounced curses upon Adam, Eve, and the serpent in Genesis 3...
- since there He promised an offspring, a deliverer who would come
- the clock of God's decree was moving forward
- as the hands of that clock moved around, the picture grew bigger and more clear
- maybe another analogy will help
- some of us old enough to remember dial-up internet access
- after the squawks and squeals of our routers connecting via the single phone line in the house
- you could access an internet page
- and you recall how that page would load from the top down, seeming to take forever!
- I mean, how could you see that cute kitten or puppy when it took so long to appear!
- this is what was happening in the O.T.
- the promise had been given but not fulfilled...for generations...until the faith came

- Jesus came at the God-decreed time, the wisely chosen time, the time appointed

### 3. Advent is here!

- God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law
- this is the glorious mystery of the incarnation: God come in the flesh
- this eternally existent Son came into this world by being born, just like you & me
- and yet, it was completely different
- Jesus was “sent forth” meaning He was sent into the world, fully God, and took on flesh
- He was fully human in Mary’s womb
- Martin Luther wrote an advent hymn that tries to capture this:

**Once did the skies before thee bow;  
A virgin’s arms contain thee now:  
Angels who did in thee rejoice  
Now listen for thine infant voice**

### 4. Born under the law

- Jesus is the heir of all things, but born under the covenant made with Moses
- all its obligations were in place
- Jesus humbled Himself and entered into that estate
- He submitted Himself to all that God had decreed in the law: He obeyed it completely
- He was under the law & would need to bear its curse for law-breaking
- but He never broke the law: He actively obeyed every letter of the law
- and He satisfied the curse of God’s judgment in His suffering & death on the cross
- by doing all this, Jesus purchased our adoption

### 5. Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed by the blood of the Lamb

- v. 5 has two purpose statements
- Jesus came and did all that was necessary in order to redeem us: purchase us
- and the purpose behind this was that we would become adopted sons of God
- we saw this redemption laid out by Paul back in Gal. 3.13
- Gal. 3:13—**Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us**
- to be adopted in this manner brings to mind Ruth & Boaz
- I know it might be a stretch, but do you remember when I preached this?
- at the first of this year, we looked to that OT book
- we saw how Boaz, as the nearest kinsman to Naomi could take Ruth as his wife
- he would redeem her, at a price, thus making her part of God’s people
- Boaz purchases the bride price for Ruth, securing the inheritance for Naomi’s lineage

### 6. Adopted

- when Christ died on the cross, He paid the price of redemption to God
- when, by faith, we believe in Christ, we are joined to Him and with Him
- we become one with Christ, we are united with Him
- but we also become co-heirs with Christ of this promised, God-ordained inheritance
- as I said last week, we are now, by God’s free grace, received into the number of His people
- we now have the right—John 1.12 (the right to be called children of God)
- all the privileges of being a son of God are now ours
- matters not if you’re Jewish or Gentile, worker or master, male or female
- we are all one in Christ

*Which brings us to the third truth to consider...*

### **III. THE PLEDGE OF ADOPTION, vv. 6, 7**

- when you purchase a house, you make a down payment on the total price of house
- this tells the lender you're earnest, serious about paying for the house
- the down payment secures the pledge to pay all in full
- God tells us He has given the down payment of our inheritance: namely, Holy Spirit
- the Holy Spirit of God is the pledge of our adoption: we are sealed, guaranteed

#### **1. We receive because we are sons**

- note the relationship order here: you are adopted into God's family
- because of this standing, God seals the guarantee, the pledge of your promised inheritance
- He does this by sending His very own Spirit into you
- now you call God "father" a blessed term of endearment
- so here it is: God sends the Son to complete the work for us
- and the Spirit is sent to complete the work in us
- the Spirit will keep on bearing witness that we are children of God, adopted sons
- by grace thru faith, when you trust Christ, you are ensured by the Spirit of God

#### **2. A son and an heir**

- no longer are you enslaved to the basic principles of religion: ceremonies, rituals, and the like
- you are part of the family, a son, given all the status and privileges
- this is a great promise to all who believe
- when we sing,

**I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able**

**To keep that which I've committed unto Him against that day**

- we are singing about the blessing of the promised Spirit holding us for our inheritance
- the Spirit ties together two things here
- first, the promise of God to us in Christ
- second, the character of the one to whom the promise belongs
- v. 7 tells us that the Holy Spirit keeps bearing witness that we are sons of God, adopted
- some people seem to fight against this witness in all their doubts & questions
- even when they know the truth: they are in Christ Jesus by grace thru faith!
- let the Spirit have His sanctifying, guaranteeing work

### **Conclusion – You & I must seek life in Christ alone**

- we do this by trusting in what He has done on our behalf
- we receive, by faith alone, that perfect righteousness achieved by His obedience to the law
- we know that He suffered the curse of the law in His death on that cross
- in His resurrection Christ defeated the powers of sin and death

### **Then we remind ourselves of what His work brings to us**

- namely, what we've seen this day, our adoption as sons of God
- and as adopted sons, what will He not freely give us, having given us His One and Only Son?

### **Do you find yourself seeking comfort and satisfaction in other things?**

- material things, things of personal worth?
- things others tell you that you need, should have, should be pursuing?
- are you looking for security in your retirement fund, in your bank account?
- does the value of your home make you content?

- or perhaps it comes from watching your children or grandchildren grow?
- many things in this life are gifts from God
- but they are not our righteousness, our justification, our salvation
- that only comes from God our Father in Christ
- remember: He is your Father, Abba, Father, now
- He is not stingy or cruel
- in Christ, He fulfills every need you could have

**So, seek Him, seek His face**

- God has not adopted us only to leave us to ourselves and our feelings or whims
- rather, empowered by the grace of God in our union with Christ
- we should always seek to show off His glory and grace in our lives in Christ