

# Adopted by the Father

Galatians 3:25-4:7

We are continuing our study in the book of Galatians, as Saint Paul shows us what the gospel is, what the gospel is not, and now we are beginning to see how the gospel changes us. Last week we studied the purpose of God's law. If we are not saved, or even made better, by following the law of God, then why did God give it to us? We learned that first, God gave us the law to imprison us. Because of the law, none of us can say that we are "good enough" to earn our salvation. The law shows us who we truly are. We are sinners who need to be rescued. The law also is like a tutor, who's primary job is to lead us to Christ. When we realize how sinful we are, and how unable we are to earn our way to God, the law then shows us how we can only be saved by grace, through faith. And once the law has accomplished its job, once it has led us to Christ, we die to it and we are no longer are under its power to condemn us.

So now, through faith alone, we no longer relate to God and his law as criminals, enemies, and slaves. We no longer are "locked up", waiting for death and condemnation. Paul is going to show us today, that through faith alone, we now relate to God as his beloved children. And this changes everything.

## Let's read Galatians 3:25-4:7

So Paul is contrasting two different realities. First, "before faith" has come, and second "after faith" has come. He is contrasting, yet again, what it means to be saved by faith verses seeking to be saved by good works. Before we have a saving faith in Christ, we are treated as prisoners and slaves, with the hope that the law can act as a tutor and lead us to faith in Christ. But until it does, our identity remains unchanged.

We are slaves to sin, prisoners under the law, and enemies of God waiting for his just judgement for all that we have done to sin against him. This identity will never change, unless faith comes in. And not a generic faith in God, or even a generic faith in Jesus. We are saved only through a **specific** faith in the gospel message. The message that we are saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone, according to the life of Jesus alone. The moment we place our trust in that message, as opposed to the false message of "salvation by works", we are saved and our identity changes. Paul tells us that now we are "sons of God, through faith."



This doctrine, this idea that we are now “sons of God through faith”, is at the very heart of the Christian life. It is not something we are working towards, **it is an identity that we already have**, and already are. Through faith, we are sons of God.

But this implies that it is not a universal identity. Most people think that we are all God’s children when we are born. But the Bible never speaks this way. Yes, we are all God’s creation. But to be his child is a whole different story. We only become his sons when we have faith in **the** Son. We become God’s children through faith.

*“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the **right** to become children of God”*

*John 1:12*

So, how does faith in Christ mean we are treated as sons? Look at verse 27. Through faith, Paul tells us we have clothed ourselves with Christ. We are literally covered with the garment of Christ. *What does this mean? Why did Paul choose this metaphor?*

**First, it reveals our new identity.** Clothes often tell people who we are. A uniform, for example, can tell us what kind of work you do. Our style can identify us with a certain social class, or people group. But to say that Christ is our clothing is to say that ultimately, we don’t identify with any of these classifications. We now identify ourselves primarily with Christ. We are Christians before we are anything else.

**Second, it shows the closeness of our relationship to Christ.** There is nothing “closer” to you than your clothes. They go everywhere with you, you rely on them for shelter. We have a moment by moment dependence on the clothes that we wear. In the same way, Christians are called to have a moment by moment dependence on Christ, fully aware of the closeness of our relationship to him through faith.

**Third, it reminds us of our acceptability to God.** Clothing covers our nakedness, our shame. Because we are clothed with Christ, God does not see us for who we truly are. To say that we are clothed in Christ is to say that in God’s sight, we are loved because of Jesus. When God looks at us, he chooses to see the works of His Son. Jesus took off our filthy rags of sin and shame, and has given us His righteousness and perfection to wear.

This is why God can call us sons. Through faith, we receive a whole new identity and a whole new life. It goes way beyond obedience to rules. Faith brings us into a loving relationship with Christ that changes every aspect of our life. **Paul is saying we are loved by God, and fully accepted by God, on the basis of our new identity as his children.**



And it is because of this, that Paul shows us what this means for us in community. That in Christ, we are all one. **The gospel is the great equalizer.** No matter what our background, no matter who we were before, in Christ we are united as one. This is because the first and most important part of my identity is not my job, my gender, or my social class. It is my identity as a Christian. My identity as a child of God. This means that all of the walls, that would normally divide people, fall down at the cross. Paul shows us three ways in verse 28.

**First, cultural barriers.** “Neither Jew nor greek” he says. In the family of God’s people, there is no place for cultural divisions. People of one culture do not need to become like people of another culture in order to become more accepted by God. Nor do we need to look down on those in other cultures and backgrounds. In the church, we should accept one another with love despite a different race, culture, or background.

**Second, social class barriers.** “Neither slave nor free.” In the world, we tend to only spend time with those who are like us. Rich people hang out with rich people, poor people hang out with poor people. Lawyers and doctors don’t hang out with waiters and bartenders. As God’s people, we seek to cross barriers and bring unity. Can you imagine a slave sharing a social meal with an aristocrat 2000 years ago? That’s what Paul was calling the church to do. True unity has no walls.

**Third, gender barriers.** “Neither male nor female.” This was probably one of the strongest barriers in Paul’s day. Women were considered absolutely inferior to men. But Paul is showing that nothing is outside of the gospels call to unity. Because women are equal before God, then they must be treated as equals in the church.

You see, the gospel changes our outlook on every sphere of life. And this is put on display through Christian community. We are men and women who see our first priority being our new identity as Christians. And Paul wants the gospel to break down barriers among us, so that we can reflect the true nature of grace to a watching world around us. In summary, his argument is this:

**First:** When we understand that we are all sinners, our pride is removed. We can no longer think that we are better than other people. Regardless of race, gender, social status; regardless of your theological knowledge, your gifts and passions; regardless of your spiritual maturity, how much or how little you sin, or how well you “get” the gospel, we are **all still wretched sinners in need of God’s grace.** So, there is no reason to create walls of division, when we all have the same hopeless beginning. We should accept everyone as equals.



**Second:** The privileges we get in the gospel are so great, they do away with any earthly divisions. We are adopted into God's family, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and filled with the Holy Spirit. How can I look down on someone who is clothed with Christ and called God's son? Or, why would I ever be jealous of someone else's position in society when I am declared perfectly righteous, and I have become adopted son of God? Nothing else should matter.

So Paul tells us that we become sons of God through faith by being clothed in Christ, and this should lead to a unity in the church that breaks down walls of division. But now he gets to the heart. *Why does this matter for you, now?*

*"And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God" 4:6*

**First, Paul tells us it changes the way we relate to God.** We no longer relate to him in a distant, generic way. Or worse, we no longer relate to him as enemies (which is what we truly are before faith). Now he dwells in us and we call him Father. The word "Abba" would be the word that an innocent child calls his father. "Daddy" would be a good translation. Just as a young child calls for "daddy", so Christians can have the boldness and certainty that God loves us as children, and we can call him "daddy." We don't relate to him as a distant creator. We relate to him as our beloved father. And this is accomplished by the Holy Spirit who dwells **in** us.

The work of Christ is something done **externally** to us, and is something we can comprehend without "feeling" anything in our hearts. It can be true about us, but we may never feel it. But the work of the Spirit is done **internally** to us, and it enables our hearts to know (both intellectually and now emotionally) that we are his children. We enjoy all the gifts of the Gospel, as the Spirit works in our hearts to help us experience the joy of our new salvation.

**Second, Paul tells us it changes our eternity.** *What are the privileges of being a son of God?* First, we have seen that we now have intimacy with our creator and Father, but now Paul is telling us that we have authority and privileges as heirs.

Being a son of God means that we are each an heir. In Paul's day, if a landowner had no sons, he could adopt a servant or slave to become his heir. That servant, who is now an adopted son, has the legal title to all the father's estate, because he is being treated as the only son.

In Christ, we are slaves who have been adopted by the Father. So we can now have a new confidence and boldness every day. We don't need to walk in fear



anymore because our Father owns everything! The world may pass away, we may lose all we have in this life, but we now have a guarantee that God will share all his glory with us in the future. Through faith, God now treats us as if we have done everything that Jesus has done. We are treated as “only sons”, like Jesus. We have legally inherited the rights of Jesus himself. **We can approach God as if we were as beautiful, flawless, heroic, and faithful as Jesus himself.** All that is His, is now ours.

**So the question is, are you acting like a slave? Or a son?**

*Are you afraid to approach God, for fear that he may reject you? Are you worried about what the future will hold, putting all your hope in what this life has to offer? Are you working hard in order to be accepted by God, with the small hope that one day God might save you if you have been good enough?*

*OR, are you confidently running to the father in prayer, crying “Abba, daddy”! Are you rejoicing in what has been promised to you through the Gospel? That God is creating a place for you in his presence forever? That all that the Father has, he will one day give to you, regardless of how good you have been? That in Christ, you are perfectly and completely accepted, only by grace through faith?*

Let us act like sons. Let us trust in Christ for our salvation, and trust in the Spirit to give us assurance to walk in this truth. I pray that today you will know that through faith alone you are God’s child, co-heirs with Christ, and you have nothing else to prove. And I pray that this hope will flood your hearts with a life-changing assurance that we are His forever.

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