

## Galatians 3:26-4:7

### Introduction

#### I. The issue of identity

- A. How we see ourselves impacts how we live
- B. Jesse (3 ½ years old) thinks she is a princess: she has attached her identity to it.
- C. We often construct our own identities based on competence, success, performance, likeability, and moral performance but these identities can alienate us from God and each other

#### II. Surrendered to grace

- A. Sum of the passage: In Christ God has made us his children
- B. We want to see ourselves as God sees us
- C. We can stop relying on/building on our own identity and receive the one God has for us

### The Passage

#### I. In Christ we belong (Galatians 3:26-29)

##### A. "In Christ"

This new identity is from Christ, because of what he's done, because of our belonging to him. Not everyone is a child of God—only those who put their faith in Christ.

##### B. In Christ we belong to God (v. 26)

- 1. Paul is using "sons" in a patriarchal society where the sons receive the inheritance and have a place of honor, privilege, and status as an insider.
- 2. So to say we are "sons" means we have all those privileges available to us
- 3. This would have been profound for Gentiles to hear this (they were always the outsiders)
- 4. Us today: where do you feel alienation, abandonment? God has made us his children so that we belong to him (see 1 John 3:1-3)
- 5. We belong NOW. We don't have to wait until heaven to belong.

##### C. In Christ we belong to each other as God's family (v. 27-28)

- 1. "Baptized into Christ/clothed with Christ": Paul reminds them of their baptism when they were dunked under water in front of the community and then received this white garment as they came out of the water—it was a beautiful experience of belonging to a family
- 2. The fundamental dividing lines of who is in and who is out (Jew/Gentile, slave/free, male/female) no longer apply. In Christ there are no outsiders. Everyone is an insider if they belong to Christ through faith.
- 3. Us today: We know this cognitively but do we believe it in our hearts? That we are a family?
  - as a church we do a good job of loving each other as a family
  - but couldn't we grow in our vulnerability with each other (asking for prayer from one another)?

##### D. In Christ we belong to a great spiritual heritage (v. 29)

1. In Christ we are “Abraham’s seed.” Christ is the rightful heir to all the promises of God and if we belong to Christ we get all the promises too.
2. Christ could have kept them for himself but he didn’t.

II. Because of what God has done we are “free.” (Galatians 4:1-7)

A. God saw our bondage (v. 1-3)

1. 1<sup>st</sup> century experience: even though sons will eventually inherit the estate, they are kept under a guardian until they come of age.
2. So also, we were under a guardian (the law) until faith came.
3. We were controlled by the “elemental spirits” which most likely refers to spiritual powers that used the law to enslave us.

B. God sent His Son to free us (v. 4-5)

God adopted us through our faith in Jesus

C. God sent His Spirit to come into our hearts (v. 6-7)

1. Paul calls it the “Spirit of His Son” rather than the “Holy Spirit” because he wants to identify us with Jesus and all that we receive through him
2. Have we underestimated our status as God’s children?
3. The Spirit means life and freedom
4. The Spirit means belonging
  - “Abba Father” is the cry of a 3 year old to her daddy
  - This is the cry Christ gave in the Garden of Gethsemane

Conclusion

I. It’s so easy to build our identity in various ways to cover up our deepest needs

II. God offers us a new identity that He gives freely: to be his children who belong and who are free

III. Any of us who are parents and love our children so much have just a taste of how much God loves us.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. If you got into a spiritual conversation at Starbucks with someone who says, "I think we're all God's children," how would you respond to them, given this passage?
3. When Paul says, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female," how far are we meant to take that statement? In what sense does he mean that, given the context of the verse? What ramifications do you think that has, for instance, on women's roles in the church or in the home?
4. In this passage, Paul talks about the privileged status we have as God's children through Christ. Do you think most Christians underestimate or overestimate their status in Christ? What should living out that status look like and feel like on a daily basis?
5. Explain in your own words what you think Paul means in Galatians 4:6. What is that experience like? How have you experienced that (or not experienced that)?