

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.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.
Amen.

I wish to explain an Old Testament concept that is carried on in the New Testament. This concept can sound biased, but it is a true concept. After a father’s death, the first-born son always received the largest part of the inheritance. The first-born son could reject the inheritance, but to be the first-born son came with it many benefits and privileges.

We live in a day when inclusive language has actually changed the words in most Bible translations. Some have even gotten so carried away that when I was at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, we could not call God Father. We had to write or say Father/Mother. And many just called God mother. This was at the height of the feminist movement. It was wrong to call Jesus Lord and King because it did not fit into the sensitivities of the feminist movement. Having said that, I do my best to use inclusive language when I read in public the Scriptures. It simply means saying, men and women, when the verse applies to both sexes. It means brothers and sisters when the verse refers to both. I refuse to call God mother. I will always refer to Jesus as Lord and King. On the cross, Jesus cries out “Father.” Jesus prays to the Father. Our Father who art in heaven. God is not up in heaven going through some transition. God is quite secure in his own identity. Father is the Christian name for God (J.I Packer, Knowing God).

1. The New Testament gives to every believer a new identity and a heavenly inheritance. Every believer is considered a first-born son, with all the rights and privileges that comes with being a first-born son. Being a first-born son is a position. As Christians we are called co-heirs with Christ. **2. Our lives are so identified with Christ that every believer has**

the rights and privileges of the first-born son, both men and women. We are sons and daughters of God. Dr. MacArthur writes, *“Because believers are God’s children, they are “heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8:27). What an incomprehensible truth: that by giving ourselves to Jesus Christ in faith, God gives to us everything His Son possesses”* (John MacArthur, Galatians, pg. 110)! This applies to all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our inheritance is not based on being first born or being male. **3. It is all based on Jesus and us being born again and adopted by the Father. Jesus paid for our inheritance on the cross for both men and women alike.** It is no small thing for both men and women to be coheirs with Christ. It is beyond our imaginations what this includes or entails. **4. The best is always yet to be.**

This is all background to what I am about to say, so please stay with me. Every newborn child has his or her own distinctive sounds and cries mimicking the sound of the mother. “Babies will match their cry to the sounds and intonations of their mother’s voice” (Todd Wilson, Galatians pg. 133, R.Kent Hughes editor). That’s why they can hear their baby’s infant cry seemingly from miles away and even pick out the sound of their baby crying amidst a chorus of other crying infants.

Friends, God Himself has better hearing than the best of mothers. **5. The Father hears the cries of every one of his children. The Father is listening for your cries.** We have been given the privilege of calling God “Abba” a most intimate of terms. It can be translated Papa or Daddy. Only in the New Testament is God referred to as Father and of course it is Jesus who calls him Father, the Christian name for God. This got Jesus in trouble for to call God Father, He was making himself equal with God. When you and I call God Father, Papa, Daddy, we are not making ourselves equal with God. God has adopted us into His family through Christ and we have the right to call God Father, Daddy, Papa, and cry out to him directly from our hearts. This is no small privilege. Jesus has made it possible for us to speak

to the Father directly. Jesus has made us acceptable to the Father. We can always speak to Him, and He hears.

In our passage today Paul has come to the realization that the Christians in Galatia have begun to doubt, to question their standing with God, whether or not they were true sons and daughters of God with a heavenly inheritance including the gift of eternal life. They were doubting their true Christian identity, their position in Christ.

6. I have a book in my office called, “Who I Am In Christ,” by Neil T. Anderson. The Bible gives to us our Christian identity and Anderson’s book describes who we are in Christ based solely on Scripture (read chapter headings). You can go to church for decades and still not have a clue of your own Christian identity, who you are in Christ Jesus. When you grow deeper in your identity in Christ you will find yourself being used of the Lord to do ministry, putting to use the spiritual gifts God has given to you within the context of your own personality. You do everything you can to be a solid witness for Christ and to build up the church, namely the people of God.

Dr Charles Stanley writes, *“We are on this earth to serve the kingdom of God and His church. And we do that by ministering to each other in small ways that steady the whole body as we give extra support to one another. In talking about such service, I am challenging you to find a need that God can meet through you”* (Christianpost.com devo. May 5, 2022). We are here to build the church up, not tear it down. If you ever find yourself listening to a person who all they can do is gripe about their church, kindly tell them to go elsewhere where they can begin growing again. Every spiritual gift given by God is there to build up the church. There is no such thing as the spiritual gift of criticism. That is Satan’s language. He lives to knock the church down. So, whose language are you speaking?

At the time of Paul’s writing there were over 60 million slaves in the Greco-Roman world. Children were under the tutelage of a house slave. The slave was under the master of the

home and the children were under the slave. For all intents and purposes children were no better off than slaves in spite of their parentage. Then there would come a time, determined by the father, when there would be a rite of passage into adulthood somewhat like a bar mitzva. Yes, the child would one day receive an inheritance due to him or her but until they entered adulthood, that inheritance was far off. The child was under the slave's care.

7. Paul is making the case that all people were enslaved to the Law until Christ came. The Law could not make any person right with God. The main purpose of the Law was to show every human being how much they needed a Savior, a Messiah, to save them from their sin. The Law is seen as a guardian and manager until the date set by the Father, moving a person from childhood to adulthood, similar to a slave raising the children of the master until the father says it is time for adulthood.

God our heavenly Father sent Jesus at the fullness of time, according to God's perfect timetable. Dr MacArthur writes, *"When the law had fully accomplished its purpose of showing men and women their utter sinfulness and inability to live up to God's perfect standard of righteousness, God ushered in a new era of redemption. When He sent forth His Son, He provided the righteousness that we could not provide for ourselves"* (MacArthur, Gal. pg. 107).

When Jesus came there was a huge expectation that something new was about to happen. There was a common language that the people spoke that could carry the Good News of Jesus Christ. There was the peace of Rome making travel safe. The Roman world had a great road system where all roads led to Rome. This was the perfect time for the Savior to be born and the Gospel to spread throughout 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 [and daughters]." God's son, Jesus, was born under the curse of the Law and fulfilled it completely. Jesus bore the curse for us on the cross. To redeem means to pay for something.

Jesus paid the price for God to save us and adopt us into his family. We have now moved from being under the guardianship and management of the Law to being a full son and daughter of God, into full adulthood.

Our inheritance is ours forever and ever including the riches of God's grace (Eph 1:7;2:7), the riches of His glory (Phil 4:19), the riches of His goodness (Romans 2:4), the riches of His wisdom (Rom 11:33ff), and all the riches of God that are found in Christ (Col. 1:29;2:3). God is our Father, and we are his children. He has placed inside of us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convinces us that we belong to God. The Holy Spirit helps you to pray, to call out, to cry out to Abba Father. Jesus has put you into a position where you can speak directly to the Father everything that is on your heart. The Father hears and understands the cries of your heart.

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." Paul is speaking the truth in love, telling his readers that they are free from the Law as their guardian for Christ has set them free. Now they have become adults through Christ and are no longer under a slave. They are fellow heirs with Christ for God has adopted them into His family forever.

8. God spared no expense to adopt us. This plan was put in place before the creation. I close with this verse from John. **9. "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1 (ESV)).** Amen and Amen.