

Children of the Living God
Galatians 3:17-4:7
Sunday, November 23rd, 2025
By Ryan Perry

Scripture

Galatians 3:27-4:7

[27] For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. [28] There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

[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.

Let's Pray

Introduction

Illustration

You may not know this about me, but when I was in 3rd grade, I was a bully. My friend Shane and I used to start fights on the playground during recess, and we always picked on this one kid by the name of Dan Wickstrom.

And for the life of me, I can't even remember why we did this, but in the moment, it made us feel great. **Because we got to feel good, strong, and superior, as we made Dan feel inferior and ashamed of himself.**

That was your pastor in 3rd grade.

Now, let's fast-forward 4 years. I'm in 7th grade, my family recently moved to a new neighborhood, and I'm in my very first class in a new school. All of a sudden, I hear someone behind me say: **What's going on with his hair? He looks like a dirty kid. He's a gutter boy!**

And all too quickly, I learned that they were talking about me because I put mousse in my hair.

This kicked off a year-long campaign by a group of 4-5 students who made it their mission to make me feel stupid, ugly, weird, and unwelcome in this new school.

Where before, I was feeling a sense of superiority as a bully, I was now wallowing and struggling with a deep sense of inferiority as I tried to do everything I could to find a place of acceptance and belonging within my new school.

As I look back on both of these experiences, it's very easy to come to the conclusion that I got what I deserved. **The bully got a taste of his own medicine as he became the bullied. In one sense, that's true.**

But 33 years later, as I compare these two experiences side by side, what really sticks out to me is that my desire for superiority and my feelings of inferiority were both symptoms of the same problem.

I had no sense of who I was, where I belonged, and I didn't know where to look for love and acceptance.

Because I didn't have a solid grasp of my identity.

If you were here last week, you will remember that Paul, in Galatians 3:15-26, was trying to help these Gentile believers understand the purpose of the Law of Moses in light of God's promises to Abraham.

And within that discussion, he tells them that the law was our guardian and it imprisoned us under sin. But now that Christ has come, we are no longer under that guardian.

Instead, we now have the great privilege of being sons and daughters of the living God, because we have put our hope and trust in Jesus to save us.

Where our identity used to be **"lost and condemned sinner"**, we now have a new, solid, and joy-filled identity as **"children of God."**

And the reason that Paul is pointing them to this new identity is so they would stop trying to earn **(by their works)** the acceptance, love, and right standing with God that is already theirs in Christ.

[FCF] And if we are honest this morning, we can fall into these same struggles. There are times when we are looking to fill ourselves with the acceptance, validation, belonging, and love from the people around us. This can manifest itself as feelings of superiority and pride as we find our value in being seen as better than others. Or it can manifest itself as insecurity, low self-esteem, or even people pleasing, because we don't understand our value in God's eyes. **Therefore, we strive to get it from people and places that will ultimately fail us.**

In fact, this is what I was doing both as a bully and when I was getting bullied.

So then realizing, how important our identity is, Paul, in Galatians 3:27-4:7, not only reaffirms our new identity, but he helps us to see how it affects the way we live and view ourselves in the world.

And the main thing he wants us to see and believe within this text today is this:

Main Point: Christ set us free to be children of God.

And because we are God's children, Paul says that three things are true of us:

1. Our sense of superiority or inferiority is gone because we are all one in Christ.
2. We can be confident that we have been fully adopted into God's family.
3. We can live with the hope that we are his heirs who will receive all his promises.

My hope for all of us today is that we would be set free from defining our identity by who we are or what we do (**which can't save us**). And instead, we would believe that our value, acceptance, and belonging come from the one who purchased us with his blood.

So let's look at the first thing Paul says is true of us as Children of God.

1. We are all one in Christ.

Galatians 3:27–28

[27] For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. [28] There is neither Jew nor Greek (Gentile), there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Illustration

If I had to guess, most of us are probably not fans of the sport known as Cricket. And as Americans, there are probably a few of us who don't even know what Cricket is or how it is played.

In short, Cricket is a bat-and-ball sport played between two teams of 11 players, where one team bats to score runs while the other team is in the field trying to prevent runs and get the batters out. **So, in some ways, it's like baseball, but in other ways it's really weird, and not like it at all.**

But the reason I bring it up is because in 1983, the Cricket World Championship was won by a team that everyone had counted out. It was the team from India. And the reason they counted them out is because India is one of the most divided nations in the world.

They have a caste system that divides people up into social and economic classes that don't mix. There are hundreds of languages, which makes collaboration hard. And there are many religions, which lead to separation, tension, and fighting between various people groups.

But somehow, in 1983, 11 Indian men from various regions, religions, and social backgrounds were able to lay these differences aside, so they could unite, as a team, to achieve an unlikely goal: **Winning the Cricket World Championship.**

Now, as uninteresting as Cricket probably is for most of us, this story provides us with a really good example of the oneness and unity that Paul tells us is ours in verses 27-28.

Because we, as believers, are no longer defined by our social or economic status, by how much or how little we achieve, and we are no longer living under the curse of sin and death.

Instead, through faith, we have “put on Christ.” We have put our hope and trust in him, which means that we are a part of his team and now wear the forever jersey that says, **“I am a Child of God.”**

In fact, this is exactly what we are telling the world when we are baptized. That we believe in Jesus, we belong to Jesus, and we are a part of his new family, because we have died to sin through his death **(being immersed under water)**, and we are raised to new life because of his resurrection **(coming out of the water)**.

This is why Paul tells us in verse 27: ***[27] For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.***

Baptism is a public proclamation that our primary identity is now found in Christ and Christ alone.

And because of this, all of the things that may have divided us in the past: Politics, economic status, our heritage, personality conflicts, gender issues, or feelings of superiority or inferiority are now secondary and done away with.

Because what matters most is the fact that we are children of God who are united in Christ.

As Paul writes in verse 28:

[28] There is neither Jew nor Greek (Gentile), there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

In Paul's day, ethnic heritage, economic and social standing, and gender were the great dividers that allowed people to set themselves above one another. Jews saw themselves as better than Gentiles, free men saw themselves as superior to slaves, and men were generally regarded as having more value than women.

But when Christ came and created his new community, **the church**, all those dividing walls were done away with. As Paul says in Ephesians 2:14:

[14] For he himself is our peace, who has made us both (Jew and Gentile) one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility...

This means that followers of Jesus should never see themselves as superior or inferior to one another. Because in Christ we all recognize that we were dead in our sin, that we have received life, peace, and acceptance with God, and that we are now equal and united members of his body.

So instead of being at odds with one another, because of our physical and social differences, we have now been given the joyful task of coming together, as God's people, to love and serve one another because of our oneness in Christ.

As Peter writes in 1 Peter 4:10:

[10] As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace:

Galatians 5:13

[13] For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.

Application

My hope for each one of us is that we will lean into our unity and oneness in Christ. That we will never elevate ourselves above each other, that we will never think of ourselves as inferior to others in the body, and that we will joyfully and sacrificially serve one another as the family of God.

Because the way we live together not only builds up our little family of faith, but it's also a testimony to the watching world that our God is real, that he is a good, good Father, and that his community of love and acceptance is available to all who put their hope and trust in Christ to save them. **Because through Christ, God will adopt them into his new family.**

2. We are all adopted by God through Christ.

Galatians 4:3-6

[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!"

Illustration

As I think back on my childhood experiences of being a bully and being bullied, there were commonalities between both of them.

As I said at the beginning of the message, in both instances, I was looking to fill myself with a sense of acceptance, validation, and belonging from the people and experiences around me. **The only problem was that I could never actually find the fulfillment I was looking for.**

Now, I wish I could say this pursuit ended when the bullying stopped, but unfortunately, my life before Christ was nothing more than a long, drawn-out quest to find fulfillment.

And yet, what I didn't realize at the time was that this pursuit was like a drug. I would find a person who made me feel accepted, or I would experience something that felt good and fulfilling, but it would only last for a moment. **Because over time, all of those feelings faded.**

So I left those things behind and moved on to the next person and the next experience that could give me the **hit of good feelings** that I was longing for.

Like an addict, I became enslaved to the drug of feeling accepted, fulfilled, and validated by the world around me. And until God opened my eyes to see my need of him, **I couldn't get out.**

This is exactly what Paul is telling the Galatians in 4:3 when he says: **[3] In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.**

Before Christ, both the Gentiles and the Jews were enslaved by the demonic and evil forces in this world, because they were trying to get to God through man-made religion.

Gentiles were seeking acceptance from fake gods made of metal and wood, while many Jews were seeking the true God, but were doing it by their human works and not by faith.

So the very things they thought would give them life, freedom, and favor with God (for the Jews) or the gods (for the Gentiles), actually enslaved them to false and demonic forces, and it imprisoned them under sin.

And unless someone came to their rescue, they would all be sentenced to death and an eternity apart from God, in hell.

But the good news of the cross is that God didn't leave them or us imprisoned under sin or under the curse of judgment. Rather, Paul says that at the fullness of time **(or at just the right time)** God sent his son, Jesus Christ, into the world to take on our frail humanity.

And in so doing, he was born into a Jewish family and came under the requirements of the law. Which meant that if he didn't perfectly obey it, he too would be under the curse of judgment like the rest of humanity.

But the Son of God didn't fail. Instead, he perfectly obeyed and fulfilled the law for us so that he could go to the cross and take our sin, enslavement, and the curse of death, while giving us new life and his perfect record of obedience.

Now, I think we would all agree that this is good news, right?

I mean who doesn't want to be free from the curse of sin, judgment, and death? But if that's all that he does for us, then we are still left with this question: **Where do we belong, and where does our acceptance and validation come from?**

And the answer is that it comes from our being fully adopted children of God. Again, as Paul wrote in Galatians 4:4-6:

[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!”

Jesus paid the penalty for our sin so that we could be adopted into God’s family. Where before we were orphans without hope, now, through Christ, we are fully functioning children of God who get to call him our **“Dad,”** because his Spirit now lives inside of us.

Where at one time we were enslaved to a never-ending search for belonging, acceptance, love, and fulfillment, now, through faith in Christ, we have been given all of those things by God and more. **Because God has poured on us his great and never-ending love.**

As it says in 1 John 3:1:

[1] See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! (NIV)

Application

If you are a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ this morning, this should give you great confidence to know that you are fully loved, accepted, and adopted by God. Which means that he is fully pleased with you, **and always will be,** because Christ took all of his anger and wrath on the cross for you.

So you can stop trying to fill yourself with the acceptance and validation of your friends, your job, your money, your children, your grandchildren, and even your spouse. For you already have those things and more as a full member of God’s family.

Because when we become adopted children of God, we also get the privilege of being his heirs.

3. We are all heirs of God’s promises.

Galatians 3:29-4:2, 7

[29] And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.

[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.

[7] So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Now, at first glance, these verses may not feel that significant to you. It may be that some of us don't fully understand what the word heir means. But more than likely, it's that we don't fully see the significance of what Paul is saying.

So, let's start with a definition for the word Heir.

An heir is a person legally entitled to the property or rank of another when that person dies.

So today, when someone passes, it is usually their next of kin (kids) who are legally entitled to get all of their money and stuff.

But it was a little different in Paul's day. When a father would die (**I say father because men, for the most part, owned the property and held positions of authority in the first century**), only the eldest son was considered the heir. Which means that he got both the money and property, and whatever rank, office, or job that he held.

This is why in the Old Testament, the next king was usually (**not always**) the eldest son of the king. He was the designated heir, and so he got the kingdom and the title of king.

But when we read Paul's words, we begin to see God's kingdom doesn't work this way. Because when the eldest son, Jesus, inherited the kingdom of God at his resurrection, all of us who have believed in him and have become children of God, also became co-heirs with him.

As Paul writes in Romans 8:16-17a:

[16] The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, [17a] and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...

This means that everything that belongs to Christ in some way also belongs to us as his people. Think about what this means:

- We are full-fledged children of God (1 John 3:1).
- We get to spend forever with God (1 Thess. 4:17).
- We get to inherit the kingdom of God (Luke 6:20).
- We are now citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20).
- We get eternal life (John 3:16)
- We get to be recipients of every promise that God has made to his people.

2 Corinthians 1:20

[20] For all the promises of God find their Yes in him (Christ). That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.

This is our inheritance as co-heirs with Christ. We who were once slaves now get to be full children of God, and heirs of everything that belongs to him.

Because God, Our Father, at his appointed time, sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us and free us from our guardian, which includes our being enslaved to evil forces, and the curse of sin and judgment.

He did this, not because we deserved it, earned it, or were entitled to it. In fact, the only thing we earned and deserved apart from Christ was judgment and death because of our sin.

Rather, God made us his children and his heirs through Christ, because he freely chose to pour his love and grace upon us. As Paul writes in Ephesians 2:4-5:

[4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

Application/Conclusion

Now, if you are here today and you don't know Jesus. If you are enslaved to the drug of trying to find acceptance, validation, and love from the people and things around you. If you can't find a place of belonging. And if you realize that you are under a curse you can't get out of.

I want to urge you to come to Christ. Believe in him and put your full hope in him, so that you can receive your full adoption and experience the joy and fulfillment of being his child and his heir.

And if this is you, I want to encourage you to talk to me or one of the other elders after service.

However, if you are an adopted child of God this morning, an heir of his promises, and are a part of his family, I want to encourage you to stop living like you're an orphan.

Turn away from trying to justify yourself. Turn away from trying to find fulfillment in other things besides Christ. And instead, lean into your **Heavenly Father, your Dad**, and remember that he sent his Son for you, and has made you a part of his unified family through his death on the cross.

Which means that you now have a new identity as his child and heir and no longer have to work to earn his favor or the favor of others.

Instead, you are free. Free to serve God and his people, the church, and free to help others experience the same joy of being adopted.

Because no matter what else happens in your life, you will always belong to him, he will always love you, and you will always be his child: today, tomorrow, and forever.

Let's pray.