

Series: Everyday Gospel | Session 2: A Forever Father & Family

Galatians 4:4-7

July 13, 2014

1. Introduction

- Some of us - maybe many of us - are likely to either misunderstand today's message entirely or dismiss it as unbelievable if we don't agree on one fundamental fact: the definition of faith.
- Faith is not merely agreeing with a preacher's sermon or evaluating the Bible as truthful. It's not claiming that you agree with the story of Jesus' life, his death, and resurrection. Faith is far more than saying, "Okay" to a set of facts.
- Faith is synonymous with dependence. More specifically, faith is to depend on something outside of ourselves. Here's how this relates to Jesus and his relevance in our lives:
- Faith in Jesus is supernatural. It's not just an act of the will, or a choice we make.
 - It's supernatural because it requires that the Spirit convince us that we need Jesus. The Spirit shows us that we are dead in our sins (Ephesians 2:1) and that our lives - even on our best, most glorious day - are an offense to God's righteousness (Isaiah 64:6). It's the Spirit who convinces us that we need something outside of ourselves to heal us because, in our sin and brokenness, we don't have the resources to change or to put ourselves in right standing with the Creator.
 - It's the Spirit who causes us, when we hear the gospel, to believe that Jesus lived a life unstained by sin, and who was perfectly pleasing to God in every single action, word, and thought. It's the Spirit who convinces us that when Jesus suffered and died, he paid the penalty for our transgressions. And it is the Spirit who convinces us of *the fact* that Jesus was raised from the dead, and by virtue of his resurrection, was vindicated by God the Father. (In other words, God raising Jesus from the dead was one and the same as God exclaiming, "I agree with everything my Son did and said! And if you trust in him as your Lord and Savior, then

I forgive you of your sins. I consider you as righteous as he is, and I will resurrect you from the dead one day, too!")

- Faith is not static; it's active. True faith isn't a one-time affair. It is a daily interaction with God the Father through trusting in Jesus Christ, the Son, day-by-day. Why? Because true faith is often accompanied by tremendous brokenness, which causes the possessor of real faith to need Jesus every day. This is why the Scriptures say in many places that **the just live by faith**.¹ True faith seeks to walk closely with Christ, dependent on his Spirit.
- So as we get into today's message, you may need to frequently course correct your thinking by reminding yourself that this is what the Bible means by faith.
- If you want to know and experience the amazing, beautiful, mesmerizing truth that I'm going to talk about today, you must reject all false forms and perversions of faith and embrace real, Biblical, vital faith in Jesus. Only those who are poor in spirit can relate to needing this kind of faith.²
- Last week, we talked about the central doctrine, or belief, about salvation and the Gospel: justification. In essence, when we walk in biblical faith, not trusting our own efforts and our own sense of goodness, recognizing that we are sinners and deserving of God's wrath, and therefore trusting in and depending on Jesus, God declares us to be righteous (or just).³ He not only forgives us of our sins, but thinks of us as being as righteous as Jesus.
- This week we're talking about the next crucial component of the Gospel: adoption. Join me at Galatians 4:4-7.

2. Text: Galatians 4:4-7

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.

¹ Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38.

² Matthew 5:3: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

³ Romans 5:1 HCSB: *"Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."*

- When Paul talks about the fullness of time, he's thinking all the way back to chapter 1, verses 3-4, in which he says that [“the Lord Jesus Christ...gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age.”](#) This verse sets the tone for the entire book of Galatians as Paul explains how Christ set us free from this broken age. He didn't just break sin's grasp, per se, on our lives. Jesus broke the grasp of this evil age that stimulates our sinfulness. Listen to Paul's amazing words in [Ephesians 2:1-4](#): “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. **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.” Our sin isn't merely individual. It is cosmic. Our brokenness is tied to the demonic, to the debasing rhythms of this world. When our life's philosophy is to follow our appetites, we are living an anti-gospel story. We are praising the prince of the power of the air. We are exclaiming that we belong to this present evil age.
- But Jesus stepped into this present evil age and lived in such a way that he peeled the fingers of darkness off of our lives. And these two verses reveal just how Jesus did that. He was:
 - [Born of woman](#): So that he would appropriately represent sinful humanity before a righteous God since humanity couldn't represent itself (read about that in Romans 5:12ff);
 - [Born under the law](#): So he was bound to fulfill the law - God's righteous demands that humanity couldn't fulfill, living a perfectly obedient life unto God;
 - [And we receive adoption as sons](#): Why? Because Jesus is the Son, and if we put our trust in him, we are adopted by God as his sons and daughters. Jesus qualified us to be adopted by God!

- Now it's one thing to declare a guilty criminal forgiven and to exonerate that person as innocent. It's wholly another to let that criminal permanently move into your home and call you "mom and dad." God did that with us. This is what verse 6 addresses...

6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

- So in regards to justification, we were given new legal standing before God, yet nothing inwardly happened. That's not say that justification isn't important. Justification is the epicenter of the gospel. But adoption is one of the components of salvation in which we are qualitatively changed. I know you may not necessarily feel it, but when God adopts us, a spiritual transformation takes place. He sends the Spirit of his Son - the Holy Spirit - into our souls. And the Holy Spirit within longs for God the Father.
- Remember, if you only have the southern, "churchianity" kind of faith, you probably can't relate to this supernatural inner longing. You may not be able to relate to the psalmist who cried out, "As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Psalm 42:1-2).
- What I find particularly interesting about this Psalm is that it was written in a time of deep turmoil; not a time of joy after receiving good news. He goes on in verse 3 to say, "My tears have been my food day and night." In verse five, he talks about his downcast soul. He then talks about his adversaries who taunt him in verse 10. But by the end of the Psalm, his heart is set on the presence of God, "Hope in God," he says, "for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God."
- Now this was at a time long before the coming of Christ and, thus, long before the Spirit inhabited believers' lives in such a way that he brought about the new birth. Yet, this faithful Old Testament worshiper's heart could not be torn away from God.

- And this is part of what the Scriptures mean when they speak of the Holy Spirit as a gift from God. His indwelling presence softens the hearts of we who believe, steering us through the fray of the battle as we live through and endure this present evil age.
- So what's our ultimate remedy for whatever it is that we face? Intimacy with our Father. We need him. He knows it. But we often forget it, so he sent the Spirit into our hearts - those of us who believe - reminding us that the sweet spot of life is our Father's tender, loving heart.

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

- When Paul speaks of being a slave here, he's referring to the time before Christ when people only had the law, not faith. And by people, I mean the Jews only. Yet even the Jews, in their knowledge of sin and righteousness, were still standing on the outside looking in because simply possessing the law doesn't lead to change. The Jewish race - God's chosen people - are just as broken as the rest of the world. The sinful heart maintained its grip nonetheless. (This is what it means to be a slave!) So everyone is on the same playing field because faith has come. We all need God. None of us can fulfill the law. Rather, the law holds us in contempt of court. Condemned, because we don't stand in accordance with God's righteousness.
- But now, because of faith alone, we are sons (and daughters). And that means we are heirs!

3. Implications of Adoption/Sonship

- Now, in order to understand the implications of this last verse, we need to better understand ancient Jewish culture.
 - Back then, the family found its identity in the father. The patriarch was solely responsible for "the economic well-being of his family" and "he had a responsibility to care for his own who became marginalized through poverty, death or war." The father cares for his family.

- This is where sonship comes in. The oldest male of the household was responsible to learn from the father because if something ever happened to the father, he was then responsible for the household.
- “The firstborn male child would replace his father in the role of patriarch...and...he received a double-portion of the family estate.”⁴ Why? Because the firstborn son was made responsible for caring for his family, providing for them. He “would need adequate resources to insure the survival of the family...”⁵
- Now think about this in relation to these few verses. We know, of course, that God the Father will never perish. He is eternal. But Jesus is the first (and only begotten) Son. Jesus is the heir. And, as Romans 8:17 says, we who have faith in Jesus are “joint-heirs” or “fellow heirs with Christ!” What is our double-portion? What are some of the implications here?
 - **First**, Paul said in Ephesians 1:3 that we are blessed “in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” Contrary to popular notions, this does not mean that we have toys to play with only when we get to heaven and that these toys are immaterial, invisible, and thus, boring. Think of it this way: If I told you I had a gift for you in my car, I don’t expect you to sit in my car, open the gift, and only enjoy the gift in my car. I’m simply holding it for you there.
 - Similarly, God is preserving spiritual blessings for us in heaven - some of which we enjoy now, but most of which will be enjoyed in the age to come. When God renews the heavens and the earth, we will enjoy it with physical, literal, perfected bodies and we will enjoy the blessings of the age to come - some of which are immaterial and invisible (such as love, peace, joy) and some which are physical (amazing food; resurrected bodies; friendship; and an even better rocky mountains; etc.). And all these blessings, the invisible and the visible, are *spiritual* blessings!

⁴ Ibid. 29.

⁵ Ibid.

- **Second**, if God is our Father, then we are a family. A forever family. Double-portions are not for us alone. They are for us to enjoy together and to use to care for one another. Whatever we have we are to use to care for the needs of our brothers and sisters in Jesus. Maybe this is why begins to conclude his letter to the Galatians with these words, **“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ”** (Galatians 6:2).we have a responsibility to care for the rest of the family as heirs.
- **Third**, concerning the phrase, “brothers and sisters in Christ,” that means something! It’s not merely a term we apply to anyone with whom we feel an affinity. Our brothers and sisters in Christ are our family. And, as such, we need to pursue intentional, inclusive friendship with one another, never for one second leaving someone out or avoiding someone because that person doesn’t fit our relationship preferences. As Ron Surgeon always says, “You can’t have too many friends.”
- And, **finally** (though there are many more implications), we must pursue our relationship with our Father. Our Forever Father.