

Reading: Galatians 3: 26- 4:7

It is through faith that all of you are God's children in union with Christ Jesus. You were baptized into union with Christ, and now you are clothed, so to speak, with the life of Christ himself. So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised.

But now to continue—the son who will receive his father's property is treated just like a slave while he is young, even though he really owns everything. While he is young, there are men who take care of him and manage his affairs until the time set by his father. In the same way, we too were slaves of the ruling spirits of the universe before we reached spiritual maturity. But when the right time finally came, God sent his own Son. He came as the son of a human mother and lived under the Jewish Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might become God's children.

To show that you are his children, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who cries out, "Father, my Father." So then, you are no longer a slave but a child. And since you are his child, God will give you all that he has for his children.

Good News Translation

Preaching notes:

Paul continues to develop his central argument that it is faith alone in Jesus Christ by which we are saved from the outcome we deserve as a consequence of our "separated from God" (sinful) nature. Remember, that what is at stake here for the Galatian churches (and for us) are not small points of interpretation or style but essential eternal life and death questions and answers to: who is Christ, what did He come for and what difference does His coming, death and resurrection make to me. Paul is echoing the Gospel of John in which we hear "as many as received Him, to them He gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1:12).

To be "in Christ" is to be part of the family of Christ, to be a much-loved son or daughter of God, highly favoured, cherished and importantly, redeemed. Paul is making clear to those who have been influenced by the "wrong Gospel" that the only way to be a child of God, to be able to call Him Father is through faith in Jesus Christ, to be "in union through baptism" with Christ. Not by the Law. John Stott put this point well when he says "God is the universal Creator, He is the universal King of Kings, ruling and sustaining all that He has made. But He is the Father only of our Lord Jesus Christ and of those He adopts into His family through and in Jesus Christ".

Christians must make no distinctions between each other; misogyny, radical feminism, racism and bigotry are totally anti-Christian. It does not mean that differences do not exist, we celebrate the way God has made us different, the beauty in diversity, but in Christ differences no longer divide us and we make absolutely no preference based on them. We cry, "we are all one in Christ".

As if all that wasn't amazing enough, Paul continues with even more breath-taking revelation to the Galatians. Without Christ, no matter what our family connections, where we live, our education or our sophistication, it amounts to nothing unless we accept God's offer of redemption through Jesus Christ. Paul explains the Gospel truth that Christ coming for us is a rescue mission with a difference, it is also a restoration and rightful inheritance mission and for those who accept it, the adoption into God's family and a coronation in God's Kingdom (see 2 Timothy 4:8). So much of Paul's Spirit inspired writing is "more than" language, it is woven particularly into Romans, Ephesians and here in Galatians as he explains the gift of grace in Jesus.

"No longer a slave" are the very words that someone caught in slavery longs to hear every minute. Paul is talking of a metaphorical slavery, a slavery of fear, of ideas, concepts and philosophies that hold us back from fully accepting Christ into our hearts. We are free, adopted by God and we celebrate the truth of His promise to be our good, good Father. Amen.