

The freedom of new life comes by the Spirit's work in our hearts.

“Now I say that as long as the heir is a child, he differs in no way from a slave, though he is the owner of everything. 2 Instead, he is under guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. 3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were in slavery under the elements of the world. 4 When the time came to completion, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God 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 God has made you an heir.” -- **Galatians 4:1-7** (CSB)

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“What do you want to be when you grow up?” I love asking this question... represents aspirations, future hopes and which way the hearts of the young are leaning.

Bill and Mama Christina brought us a meal and as Bill asked Ewen this very question I was struck by to an extent, I still ask this of myself!

Certainly I am not full grown yet?! When I grow up I want to be like Jesus!

To those feeling too “young” to flourish; too immature to understand how we are saved or live as Christians; to churches troubled by the preaching of gate-keepers making it harder to get “in,” Paul says, in Christ, you are already grown.

For breaking through into the freedom promised, into the inheritance that is ours, we need the Spirit's application of Christ's work. And the Apostle wants his readers to realize and take comfort in the fact that the Spirit has worked among them.

We come to the same realization in our day - and by Scripture are invited to the fullness of this new life in Christ.

These verses come on the heels of a game-changing truth.

“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to the promise.” -- **Galatians 3:29** (CSB)

Huge news if Paul can be trusted, and given that his letter was revered and maintained as Scripture, he can be trusted!

If, by faith, you belong to Jesus, you are made a child of God. Heirs, given a new family, freedom, and transformation. Yes!

Salvation is Sonship

At first glance, the first verse is concerning. ‘Hey good news, you are a child of God, but also you differ in no way from a slave!’

We keep reading though and quickly learn that Paul is using the slave/child comparison as a way of letting those in Christ realize they are spiritually grown.

‘In ancient times, the process of “coming of age” was an important and well-defined process. A Roman child-heir was a minor under guardians until age 14, and was still to some degree under trustees until age 25. Not until then could the youth exercise complete, independent control over his estate.’ TK

Sonship was seen as a legal reality - could be applied to men and women.

This is the law/gospel distinction. The law was a guardian, to make humanity aware of our need for rescue. For something more.

In the same way, when we WERE children we were in slavery to the elements of the world. Sin, earning, pride and despair.

But in the fullness of time, when time came to completion, something universe-altering took place.

“God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

To come into our inheritance, ownership; redemption is needed and that is what Jesus delivers.

Born of a woman, born under the law. Our perfect representative. That would live in our place and take our place in death on the cross, redeeming, buying back from sin and death, his people, those that believe in him.

Redemption then slides into adoption, family, child status. The weight of the work is taken, all of it, by Christ.

I mentioned adoption last week - it's a done deal because the Father says so! But in thinking of the process of it I was struck afresh by the great grace of God. When we set out to adopt, it was the start of a long and costly process. In-home visits, mountains of paperwork, waiting and wondering. Then you go to another country and do more paperwork, waiting, and paying out the costs to make it all happen.

Rejoice when they finally hand over your child and the rest of life begins.

But our spiritual adoption is far more weighty and costly. Sure it took a lot to adopt, but I can't imagine going through the process and then sending my oldest child to China with the expectation that her life would be given so another child could come home.

God's heart for us is so full he sent his son to redeem us. To give himself for us. And by his work we are saved, made sons and daughters forever. No longer under a guardian.

It is the son who makes us of age. "Our inheritance is not a prize to be won. It is a gift from Christ." Tim Keller

Sonship -men and women, heirs, in, no questions of calibre or credentials. In Christ you are part of the family on the basis of faith. Full rights and privileges. No last rules to be kept or met.

"Jesus says. "Acknowledge and accept who I want to be for you: a Savior of boundless compassion, infinite patience, unbearable forgiveness, and love that keeps no score of wrongs. Quit projecting onto Me your own feelings about

yourself. At this moment your life is a bruised reed, and I will not crush it; a smoldering wick, and I will not quench it. You are in a safe place.” BM

The gospel, the power of God to save. And it is so good. This Sonship is our legal status before God.

We have no problem with this - especially if we can keep it in the realm of intellectual exercise - just having knowledge of it.

But the Father doesn't just leave it at “legal,” he has promised new life, and it comes by the Spirit.

The Spirit Secures Our Sonship

Who is this “Spirit of the Son?”

“If you love me, you will keep my commands. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. 17 He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn't see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you.” -- **John 14:15-17** (CSB)

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.” -- **John 14:26** (CSB)

Jesus making his way to the cross, gives his final teaching and says the Spirit is coming, a helper that will open your heart and eyes to see the goodness of redemption. To shape and guide your life.

Underneath all of the ramblings of the false teachers, in the churches of Galatia, the Spirit had moved in the lives of believers, this was the anchor to their citizen status in the Kingdom of Jesus. Indisputable.

The promise of Abraham is realized in the Spirit. ‘Christ redeemed us by becoming a curse in our place... “The purpose was that the blessing of Abraham would come to the Gentiles by Christ Jesus, so that we could receive the promised Spirit through faith.” -- **Galatians 3:14** (CSB)

“[T]he promise of the Spirit is equated with the blessing of Abraham, even though the Old Testament passage does not mention the Spirit. Since the “blessing of Abraham” came in the form of a “promise,” this word is the one Paul uses throughout the argument of Galatians 3 to refer to the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. In a statement crucial to this argument, Paul says the fulfillment of this promised blessing for the Gentiles is in their having experienced the Spirit as a living and dynamic reality. The blessing of Abraham, therefore, is not simply “justification by faith.” Rather, it refers to the life of the future now available to Jew and Gentile alike, achieved through the death of Christ but applied through the dynamic ministry of the Spirit—and all of this by faith.” **Gordon Fee**

It is what we are meant for in Christ. Because there is a difference between knowing and experiencing. To the Galatian Christian, Paul attacks the lame attempts to corrupt knowledge of salvation with the experience of salvation in the Spirit. Renewed hearts, softened hearts, longing for Christ and others.

I am struck that our generation has spent so much time getting the knowledge right that we have missed the experience of this salvation. The freedom that is in Christ by his Spirit.

I feel like the Spirit is saying - ‘you have known long enough, it's time to experience this freedom, this new life!’

“And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “'Abba', Father! ” -- **Galatians 4:6** (CSB)

The Father sends his Spirit into our hearts, confirming salvation, sealing our adoption, “crying Abba! Father!”

The Spirit applies our adoption and frees us to cry out to God with the humility and boldness of a young child. In real relationship.

Around our house the kids never run to our room, instead they cry out “Mom!” when in distress. I try to get them to cry out “Daddy!” but to no avail! But they can cry out when in need because they know she is there - her presence makes their cries worthwhile.

It is the same way for us with God, because we are his children we can approach him, cry out for help knowing he is here with us. By his Spirit close to us, keeping us, confirming our sonship and security.

“For all those led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons. 15 For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, “Abba', Father! ” 16 The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children,” -- **Romans 8:14-16** (CSB)

This is our way through life and its struggles, through highs and lows. As the Spirit applies the work of Christ to our hearts, as He works transformation in us, we increasingly trust Him and expect he will hear and respond to our cry.

“Suddenly we are freed with God, like a child is free with a parent. We are not involved in stiff, formal protocols in relation to God. We don’t have to be afraid lest we put our foot in our mouth, or embarrass ourselves, or get sent out of the room because we didn’t use the right title. We can address God as freely as we address our parents. It is the kind of freedom that combines intimacy with reverence. We are still aware of the majesty and awesome glory of God. We don't try to reduce God to a level of coziness where we can manipulate him. The intimacy is a freedom to share ourselves, to express ourselves fearlessly in God’s presence. We are free to be spontaneous, personal and uninhibited. Faith is not a formal relationship hedged in with elaborate courtesies; it is a family relationship, intimate and free.” **Eugene Peterson**

And it is made so by the Spirit in our hearts.

I think it is safe to say we don’t need more knowledge of our salvation, our adoption in Christ, we need the increasing experience of it by the Spirit. To be reminded of it by the sweet work of the Holy Spirit every day. To the point this supernatural work becomes our natural way of life.

Along with the Spirit confirming it all the more with the miraculous; healing, removal of deep ceded sin and habits, the prophetic drawing children closer to the Father. It is the way the church was birthed, it was the way the Galatians could confirm they were children of God. In a stumbling world unsure of its next step, the Spirit is our way forward for the glory of Christ and our good.

The Spirit is our inheritance. The Spirit applies our sonship. The Spirit brings us to life. It's time for us to let and long for the Spirit to work in the church.

We have a tendency to keep the Spirit boxed in. But for Paul, the Spirit's presence and work is the vital evidence the Galatians need to realize they are in Christ, heirs, part of the kingdom. They have the experience of the presence of God in their hearts, the Spirit of the Son, they don't need circumcision or sabbath to gain salvation. They can go on living the freedom of new life in Christ.

It's the same for us!

“The Christ within who is our hope of glory is not a matter of theological debate or philosophical speculation. He is not a hobby, a part-time project, a good theme for a book, or a last resort when all human effort fails. He is our life, the most real fact about us. He is the power and wisdom of God dwelling within us.”

– **Brennan Manning**, *Abba's Child*

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Would you be so bold as to **ask the Spirit to apply the Sonship** we have in Christ afresh in your heart? To free us to new life, that we would experience our inheritance with joy, exuberance and expectation. Come Holy Spirit!

If you are not sure of the Spirit's place in your life, grab hold of this redemption promised in Jesus and his work for you in his life, death, and resurrection. **Trust in him for salvation.**

We were once slaves to sin and the elements of the world. Those things determined to keep us from our Creator and real life. But God, while we were still sinners, sent his son as a demonstration of his love for us. His heart to make us children and give us eternity with himself.

"Reflecting on these truths, our hearts cannot sit still. We are moved with wonder as we consider the great lengths to which God has gone to comfort his people. He has sent forth both his Son and his Spirit - the Son objectively to rescue us eternally from the penalty of sin, and the Spirit subjectively to rescue our attitudes and actions in daily life. The work of the Son is "outside in," an alien

righteousness; the work of the Spirit is "inside out," an experience in which we cry out, "Abba Father!" GTB

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In Christ you have come of age - rest in your sonship and let the Spirit have full reign over your heart to experience this newness of life. That you would be forever changed and Christ would be glorified!