

The portion that we are in this morning -- **Galatians 3:26-4:7** -- is essentially the culmination of Paul's defense of the true gospel.

Remember that's how he started out in chapter one, he said, "You are moving away from the gospel. You're going to this different gospel, to this false gospel." And he makes this very fervent appeal for the Galatians to return to the grace of God -- instead of being misled by a different gospel. Or misled by thinking that the means of salvation is by their works, by their good works.

And he reminded them of what the Lord had done through Abraham to fulfill His plan of salvation for all the nations, and how that, as we believe in the same God that Abraham believed in, we inherit the promises and blessings of Abraham.



Our justification, our ongoing sanctification, and our ultimate glorification are not through the keeping of the law, but by exercising faith in the Lord Jesus, who redeems us, fills us, leads us, and presents us faultless, before the throne of God.

And in this passage, Paul elaborates on our identity to declare that we are not only the seed of Abraham -- **we are, most importantly, adopted as the children of God.**

So let's read:

Gal 3:26 NIV So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith,

Gal 3:27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Gal 3:29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Gal 4:1 What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate.

Gal 4:2 The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.

Gal 4:3 So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world.

Gal 4:4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

Gal 4:5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

Gal 4:6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Gal 4:7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

In previous weeks, we learned that the law of God served as a guard and a guardian to bring us to Christ. It was to point us to Jesus. And what was the Lord's purpose in bringing us to Christ?

It was for the Lord to deal with the sin that had separated us from Him -- to restore us in His intended relationship with us. The broken relationship -- the sin that had caused that break in the relationship -- God deals with the sin. And He restores us in relationship with Him.

The Lord Jesus Christ cleansed our sins through His perfect sacrifice.

1. He removed the penalty of our sins.
2. He removed the penalty of death by giving us eternal life when we believed in Him.
3. And He filled us with Himself, with the Holy Spirit -- with His Holy Spirit.

Those three gifts of God, by grace -- because of His unbounded mercy and unconditional love -- those three gifts alone would have been sufficient. But the Lord does more.

He adopted us as His children.

- We're not just freed from slavery.
- We're not just given power to live by.
- We're not just given everything we need for life and godliness.
- **We are given a new identity.**
- We are made His children.

Which means we must seek the heart and counsel of the Lord to know how we should live as His children.

But before we get to that -- to how we must live as God's children -- I want to go through three truths Paul references in this passage that are interwoven with, and are foundational to, our new lives as the children of God.

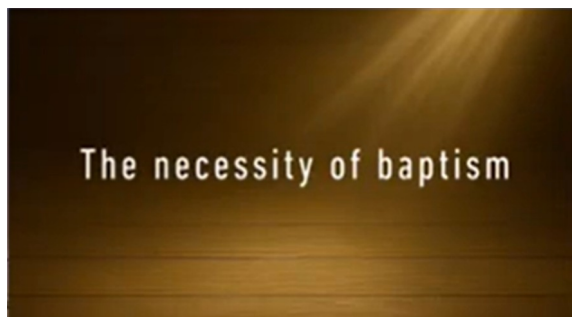
Those three things are:

- ★ the necessity of baptism,
- ★ the equality of all believers, and
- ★ the timing of our inheritance.

So -- the necessity of baptism.

In the ancient Near East, and particularly for the Jews, **the practice of water baptism -- of being immersed in water as a public witness -- that would have been a familiar rite of initiation.**

Baptism signified a new beginning. And what was familiar and representative of repentance from sin, before Jesus' sacrifice on the cross -- it became significantly more important after Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Because everyone who believes in the atoning and life-giving nature of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection -- **they are declaring to the world, when they are water baptized, that their old sinful self died and was buried, and that they have been raised up -- resurrected -- to new life in Christ Jesus.**



And since the garments stained with sin were buried with the old sinful self, we are now -- and notice the language here in verse 27 -- **we have taken a deliberate action to clothe ourselves with Jesus, with Christ.**

(Gal 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.)

Every day of our new lives, we make a conscious decision to put on the:

- character,
- nature,
- virtues,
- truths,
- ways,
- righteousness, and
- glory of Jesus Christ.
- We are clothed differently.

We are clothed by Jesus Himself.

Every single day when we wake up in the morning and we decide what outfit we are going to wear, depending on what we're going to do -- working out in the yard, going to work, the office, just going out to play sport, pickleball, whatever it may be -- **we are making a conscious, deliberate decision: this is what I will put on.**

And the Bible is saying to us that as new creations in Christ Jesus, every single day we would make a conscious choice and decision to say:

- I put on Jesus Christ.
- I live and move and have my being in Him, and
- I put on His righteousness.
- I put on His promises.
- I put on Himself.
- So that when people look at me, as I go through this day, -- they will not see me.
- They will see Jesus.

So. Baptism is not “done to us.” Baptism is “done by us” -- in obedience to the Lord's command.

That's the nature of water baptism. **Baptism doesn't save, nor perfect, us.**

Baptism declares our willful commitment to the Lord, and reminds us of our daily responsibility to the Lord.

So we're saying, I willfully -- **of my own will, of my own movement** -- but of course, keeping in mind that the Holy Spirit is moving in us, and convicting us, and teaching us, and showing us, and bringing us to Himself, bringing us to the Lord -- and as we respond to that, we're saying,

“Lord, I commit to publicly declare who You are, to publicly state that You are the Lord of my life. And as I do that -- as I make that willful commitment to the Lord -- this one-time act that I do -- is now a daily reminder to me to stay in that commitment to the Lord, to persevere in that way, to be responsible to put into practice what the Lord speaks to me.”

So baptism is not to be considered optional -- but rather necessary.

Now, if you have any questions about baptism, I encourage you to listen to the message on water baptism in our Church Life playlist in our YouTube channel. And you can always -- anytime -- you can raise questions that you have about any of these topics in our weekly Wednesday evening sermon discussions.

So I'm not going to go into a lot more detail about baptism, except to once again say that **this is the command of the Lord -- to be baptized, to go into all the world, to make disciples, and to do these activities that would cause us to walk in His ways.**

And here Paul is making this statement as a given.

He's not saying "if you think of being baptized" or "if there's a..." -- he says **"as you are baptized," "since you were baptized," "because you obeyed the Lord in baptism," continue to put on the Lord Jesus Christ.**

Now, keeping that in mind -- because each believer has been baptized and subsequently clothed with Christ -- verse 27 -- notice verse 28:

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

What does that mean? How should we understand this: "equality of all believers?"

Clearly, we don't lose our individuality when we become believers. We don't all become one amorphous blob when we are joined into the body of Christ. "Join the body of Christ and lose who you are. Just become part of the blob. We'll just become part of the blob." **Nope.**

We don't lose our free will when we choose to obey the Lord and walk in His ways. When we become believers, it's not what we lose -- but rather what we gain -- that is most glorious.

You see, verse 28 was an incredibly radical statement in the ancient Near East in the first century. And it continues to be a radical statement for the whole world in the 21st century. The Word of God is making clear that there is no justification for gender, culture, political, wealth, privilege, education, or power-based, discrimination, subjugation, or differentiation in Christ Jesus.

The word of God is making clear that when we come to Christ Jesus, when we believe in Him -- regardless of the past, regardless of who we are, regardless of our capabilities, and skills, and vocations, and what we have achieved in our careers, and whatever -- or not achieved in our careers, and whatever the disappointments or discouragements, whatever it may be that you have come to the Lord with -- **all of that past -- none of that: restricts you, holds you back, or constrains you. It is: we are made equal in Christ Jesus.**

Now, by the way, you'll notice that the wording here in how Paul talks about it -- he talks about sonship -- and that seems to exclude women. It is not the case at all. What is very important to understand in the ancient Near East was that sons were the ones who inherited the father's property -- the father's inheritance. Daughters were married off. And even today, in cultures all around the world, you know what that looks like, or you could resonate with that statement.



So when Paul is making this statement that **we are made the sons of God, or the sonship in Christ Jesus**, what he's really saying is that whether you're male or female -- that's exactly why verse 28 says what it does -- **whether you're male or female, you have been brought into this inheritance. You are receiving this inheritance. You are not shut out. You are included in this blessing of the Lord that He provides for all His children.**

It is very similar to when the body of Christ or the Church is referred to as "the bride of Christ." Does that mean that the Church is only filled with women? Sometimes in some churches, it feels like that -- but men just don't seem to be stepping into what needs to be stepped into. But no, that's not the statement at all. Right?

It is the fact that we are called together without making any kind of distinction -- without making any kind of discrimination -- to say we are equally called into the body of Christ.

Which is a very liberating thought.

Which is a very liberating truth -- that we would come into this relationship with the Lord and this relationship with one another without any kind of -- any kind of things that hold us back.

"I'm just not able to... that person can"... this resonates with what John was saying earlier too -- I mean, "that person can, but not me"...." No. That's not what the Bible says.

We are brought equally to the presence of the Lord -- to the foot of the cross. And as we wait on Him, as we receive from Him, as we are led by Him, we are able to fulfill the unique purpose and call that the Lord has for our life. And we are able to encourage the unique purpose and call being fulfilled in our brother's life, in our sister's life -- and we say, "Oh, thank the Lord, that He does this for us equally -- that He is not a respecter of persons, that He does not show favoritism. That **He says, "I receive you equally, and I love you equally."**

By the way, the Jews were looking down on others because they said, "We are the chosen," and "The Messiah comes from us," and "We are something, and nobody else is."

And the Greeks and the Romans were saying, "Oh, we are something because we have all the power. We have the political power and the military power, and we're the best looking," and they were lauding their position over everyone else. And they valued their attributes as such and said, "We are unequal to somebody else in whatever way -- no matter whether you call on the same God or not -- we are unequal because we are better."

And in the cross -- or at the cross -- and in the Word of God, this statement was radical. It was radical at that time. It remains radical for us now -- that we are called equally. That we receive the same blessings before the Lord.

In the Lord Jesus -- we're all, every believer, of equal value, worth, and potential -- because of the Lord Jesus.

And so, as this is worked out in society and culture -- **the reality is that we don't have that kind of equality in society.** Because the leavening effect of the Word of God -- the fact that a leaven affects the whole batch of dough -- that's the imagery that's used in the Word of God about the Kingdom of God. The leavening effect of the Word of God and the Kingdom of God that is immediately apparent in our lives, because we are in the Kingdom of God, **is not immediately apparent in the world at large.**

The world at large is not directly being influenced by the Word of God being living and active in their lives, by being effective in their lives. And so it takes time for society and culture to be impacted.

What we do have to do -- so we can't expect that the people of the world are living by the principles of the Kingdom of God if they don't know the King. So what we have to do is to be responsible to follow and obey the command of the Lord -- **to make the King known to people** -- so that they may then enjoy the blessings and benefits of the Kingdom of God. That's our responsibility. That's when society and culture can't help but be transformed.

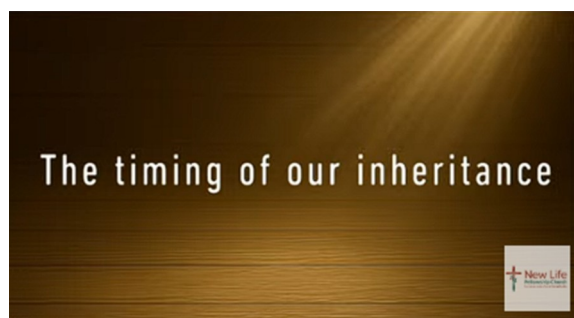
All right. One more new life in Christ foundational truth -- and that is:

The timing of our inheritance

So, very quickly -- in chapter four that we read there at the beginning of chapter four -- **"As long as an heir is underage, he's no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate."** Even though the child -- the heir -- owns the whole estate, he has no authority, as such, to do anything over the estate. He's kept under guards, and guardians, and tutors, and trustees, and restricted, and he, or she, has to learn, and to develop, and mature, and come into this understanding, and everything else.

The heir is subject to guardians and trustees -- until the time set by the father.

So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world -- the forces of darkness, the things of this world, as such. **But when the set time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law -- that we might receive adoption to sonship.**



This is important for us to understand: that there was a timing of the Lord.

So He created and put things in place. And then, even before the creation of the world, He had ordained the plan of salvation. But there was a time that had to be fulfilled -- that had to pass -- in which all things were being worked together so that

- at the right time the Messiah could come,
- at the right time Jesus could come,
- at the right time He could give His life and offer His sacrifice.

And therefore, at the right time, we are brought into the Kingdom of God.

- We are joined in to be equal in the Kingdom of God.

So that timing of the Lord is critical -- which means that in every aspect of our lives:

- We must wait on the Lord.
- We must be patient before Him.
- And we must anticipate -- discern and anticipate --
- the timing of God for the seasons of our life.

We've talked about this in the previous weeks -- we try to make happen something that we desire, or maybe even what the Lord has spoken to us, and **we try to do it in our own strength, in the flesh -- and we miss the timing of God.** We're either too early -- we're trying to rush ahead -- or we're too late -- we're falling behind. Or we take some detour and we lose time that we should have been spending and maturing and preparing and getting ready for this next season.

But it is important for us to understand that the inheritance is not just given into our hand when we are immature to handle it -- but rather, as we mature in the Lord as disciples of Christ, then -- even though we are His sons and daughters -- **we come to a specific time when the inheritance is fully given to us as His stewards.**

The son -- the heir -- is not meant to just waste away the resources, but is meant to take those things that have been given to him, that have been given as his inheritance, and to **use them wisely** -- to do what is necessary, according to the Lord, according to the Master's command.

So the timing of the Lord is critical.

Now, we previously considered the promises the Lord made to Abraham and the purpose of the law, so I'm not repeating those points this morning. I want to return to the central theme of this passage, which is that,

We have been adopted as the children of the Lord...

We must be careful not to read those verses too quickly. This is an incredible statement -- the Lord God Almighty has redeemed us in the person of Jesus Christ, and given us of Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit. The triune nature of God is clearly presented here. And He's done this so that we may call out by the Holy Spirit -- "Abba. Father."

Abba, in Aramaic, is an endearing term for father. It's descriptive of an intimate relationship. It's like calling your father "Daddy" and crawling -- into -- just climbing into his lap and putting your head on his bosom. **This is a term of intimacy.** This is a term of a relationship that is very close and dear, but it's even more dear than that.

When we think about what God is doing -- when we believe, and accept, and confess the Lord God Almighty:

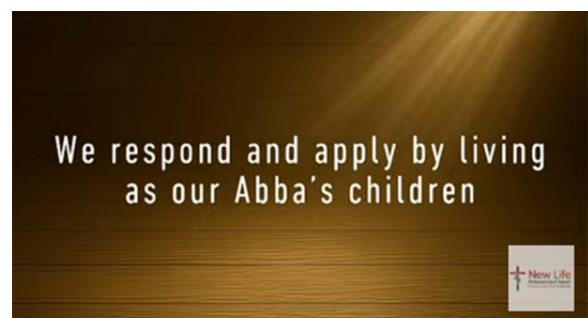
- we are no longer known by our past, our sin, our earthly identity.
- We are now brought into the family of God.
- Our sins are forgiven.
- **We have a new eternal identity in Christ, and**
- **we are known as children of God.**

This is an incredible statement.

And so, we must respond and apply the Word of God that we are hearing, that we are receiving -- by living as our Abba's children.

There is a contrast between living as an orphan, or with an orphan spirit, or as a slave to sin -- and then living as an adopted, loved, beloved child of God.

Everybody in the world -- the Lord loves them unconditionally. The Lord pours out His grace and mercy on them. But there is a difference between those that experience the common grace of God, and those that would experience the saving grace of the Lord Jesus, to come into this relationship with Him as His adopted child.



And that privilege that we have, allows us now to look at all of life differently. When we think of God Himself -- He's not some distant master, or just commanding the winds and the waves and power and all this. No -- He's our Father.

Now, when I make that statement, maybe you've had a good relationship with your earthly father. Maybe you've had a bad relationship with your earthly father. But this is not a point of comparison. I'm not saying to you -- if you have experienced a good relationship with your earthly father, then think of God as your heavenly Father. No. I'm saying God is altogether different. And His relationship with us -- **when He says and identifies Himself as our Father -- is altogether different, altogether better, altogether lovely, altogether of good report, than anything we could think of in the world.**

And so, we have to meditate on -- we have to comprehend -- we have to pray for discernment, to say,

"Lord, help me to see You as my loving heavenly Father, who cares so much for me, who loves me so dearly, who is willing to give me the Kingdom."

That's what the Word of God says:

Luk 12:32 "... it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

That's what the Bible is saying. And we have to think about it in those ways.

When we think about our heavenly Father in these ways, then we realize that we're not living a life of independency. **We're living a life of dependency.** Because He longs for -- He's not saying, "I'm your Father, but don't come to Me." He says, "I'm your Father -- come to Me all the time." And it doesn't matter how -- request -- come and ask Me. Come and ask Me, and I will give it. And I will respond.

Now, there's all sorts of immaturity in us when we come to our fathers. But He's asking us to come because:

- He listens.
- He cares.

And when we have any lack of peace, and any lack of our security in the world -- our heavenly Father is one to whom we can run, and:

- be at rest.
- Be at peace.
- Have that confidence --
- that He will hold us,
- that when we are in His arms and in His hands, no one can snatch us out.

That's the promise of the Word of God.

That's the nature of this God that we serve -- as a loving heavenly Father.

And as we do all of this, as we continue to build in this way, as we continue to meditate on His Word in this way, as we continue to experience this love of God and this relationship with God -- you see, then, when we speak to somebody else, and even as we have opportunity to share about the gospel -- this is not a theory. This is not some sort of "information." This wasn't the latest answer to the question that you got when you said in ChatGPT, "Who is God and how do I relate to Him?" No. This is not information that you're sharing with somebody.

This is experience that you can share with somebody

...that you say to them, “I know the Lord God Almighty as my loving, heavenly Abba. Oh, I call Him Abba every single day. Oh, and He loves to respond to me. I bring my greatest needs to Him. I cast my cares on Him, and He cares for me. I bring my life to Him, and He takes it and makes it something beautiful. I bring all my fears to Him, and He gives me peace. I come to Him wanting -- and He leaves me overflowing.” **Oh, that is the experience that we need to be able to share with somebody.**

So I want to encourage you. I want to challenge you -- that we would be people who are saying,

“Lord God, I want to know You in this way -- as Abba, as Heavenly Father.”

In the rest of his letter to the Galatian believers, Paul describes what it means to live as a child of God:

- He warns against returning to the slavery of sin.
 - ▶ **We are to live in the freedom of Christ.**
- He reminds us that Christ is to be formed in us.
 - ▶ **We are to be transformed into the image of Christ.**
- We’re not to live according to the law.
 - ▶ **We are to live by faith and grace.**
- We’re not to indulge the flesh.
 - ▶ **We are to serve others by bearing the fruit of the Spirit.**
- We’re not to condemn those who sin,
 - ▶ **but we have to restore them in love.**
 - ▶ **And we are to live a crucified life.**

I’m giving you a preview of all the messages that are coming up in the next few weeks. How exciting! I’m looking forward to it.

But this morning, our charge is this:

our Christian lives are not made possible

- by our resolve,
- by keeping the law,
- by keeping the rules, and
- by associating only with those who are of like precious faith.

▶ ***Our joyful, victorious Christian lives are made possible by our relationship with our loving, heavenly Abba -- our Father.***

The quality of our Christian life is directly proportional to the level of intimacy of our relationship with our Father. That’s what it’s going to be. That’s what it is.

So the challenge and the encouragement for us this morning is to say,

“Lord God, I want to know You in this way. I want to love You in this way.”

If you’ve grown up in church all your life, you may not have experienced this kind of a loving relationship. You may have encountered God of the rules -- the God who says, “Do this” and “Don’t do that,” the God who is remembered for the Ten Commandments.

And I want to challenge you. I want to encourage you -- that you would today be saying,

“Lord God, help me to know the Lord God -- Abba.”

And maybe you’ve never grown up in church. Maybe you’ve never experienced any of this -- and no rules, or even love. Let this be the day. Let this be the time when you say,

“I want to know this God in this way.”

This is a personal God.

This is not a distant God.

This is a God who cares for me and who longs to draw me into this sonship -- into this child-being -- into this being a child of His.

So this is what I want. This is what I need.

Heavenly Father, we just thank You so much. And Lord, Your Word is powerful and just -- Lord -- so precise, so incisive, Lord, to give us exactly what we need. Each one of us are seeking identity. Each one of us are seeking to make a difference. Each one of us are trying to figure out where we fit in this world and what the value of our lives is -- lives are. And Lord, each one of us is trying to figure out how to make our lives count.

I pray, Father, that the greatest revelation we can have -- the greatest truth that will consume us -- is that, Lord, we are made in Your image to be Your children. And that when we are adopted as the children of God, we have the potential to do everything that You have purposed for us.

Lord God, I thank You, that will look different in each one of our lives. I thank You, that You deal with each one of us according to who we are and according to our needs. But I thank You, Lord, that You will work in us as Your children so that Your character is reflected in us -- so that Your truths bear fruit in us -- so that, Lord, we are resembling You. Thank You, Jesus.

Father, we pray for every single person at New Life to experience this new life in Christ, reality -- that we will be, that we will live, that we will interact with one another, as children of Abba. God.

We ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.