

## Intro,

*A couple had adopted a boy from Korea. They called him Eric. When he was 5, they were having lunch at a restaurant, and Eric made conversation with a boy at the next table. At one point the boy asked Eric, "Why don't you look like your mom?" "Cause she's a girl," he replied.*

*Who do you look like?*

People who know my mum used to say that I look like her...My daughter Olivia looks like her mum. We all look like our parents or some one in our family.

But there is a more important question this morning than "Who do you look like?"  
It is...*Who do you want to look like?*

Paul takes a great effort to explain it to the Galatian churches Gal 3:26- 4:1-7.

**CONTEXT:** Paul is defending the essential message and application of the gospel (Show the map).

Paul is defending his gospel against a group called **the Judaizers**. The Judaizers were a group of very conservative so-called "Christians" who had come into the church after Paul had left and contradicted his teaching. They were taking what Paul said, and twisted it. In fact, he called their gospel, no gospel at all. The people in Galatia were told that the way to be right with God was to believe in Jesus and follow the right set of rules. They were bewitched into thinking that you start the Christian life by faith, but you complete yourself by works. Paul considered this impossible and ludicrous. His conclusion was that this nullified grace and dishonoured Christ.

In response to that false teaching he introduces the concept of 'sonship' in v26.

### **1. The concept of 'Sonship' V26-27.**

#### **a. Meaning of 'sons'**

Paul says that '*we are all sons of God*'. It is a great statement, but causes a division among Christians. (Usually at this point a half of congregation leaves the room). Paul is being accused of being an antifeminist. Why Paul does not use the word '*children*' as he used it elsewhere in his letters? Why *sons*? Is he being discriminative against women?

*Explanation* - The last thing on Paul's mind when he used the term '*son*' was to describes some kind of 'manly' or 'male' traits.. The term '*son*' is especially related to both Jews and Gentiles, men and women, etc., all who have been free from the Law and now live by faith in Christ.

If we are to translate '*sons*' as '*children*' then we are to miss the revolutionary claim that Paul is making here. In most ancient cultures women could not inherit property. Term '*son*' meant '*legal heir*'.

#### **b. How do you become one? A universal claim?**

The term 'sonship' is not universally given. The doctrine of God as a universal Father was not taught by Christ nor by his apostles. There is a sense in which all humans are God's offspring because all humans have been made in his image. But Paul speaks of a much deeper kind of relationship here. Being a 'son of God' is a special promise by God for the last days and describes that special relationship of intimacy that the people of God can have with God. The 'sonship' comes from Christ. We are only his sons through our faith in his Son Jesus Christ. – **So, how do you become one? By God's Grace through our faith and not by the works of the law. V26b**

## II. Marks of ‘Sons’ V27, 28, 29.

### 1. Clothed with Christ V27b.

We are to be clothed in Christ. So much so, that when we are seen, Christ is seen.

*The context of this comes from **Roman culture**. For when the Roman child came of age, he took off the garments of a child and put on the toga of the adult citizen.*

In the same way, in baptism the believer in Christ removes the garments of the old life (its habits, its addictions, its attitudes) and replaces those with new garments (of Christ’s attitudes, love, and service). We proclaim our new status as sons and daughters of God through baptism and we *exhibit it through changes in our lives*. So baptism is a drama. The old is gone; the new has come. The old clothes are gone; the new ones are put on. And now, we are true children of God that everyone can see.

Paul sees ‘faith’ as being expressed originally in ‘baptism’. He does not say that baptism is enough for salvation, however it might seem like. In the early Christian days baptism was the initial and necessary response of faith. Both faith and baptism came hand to hand. Nowadays it may take some time before believers are baptised. According to Paul, faith secures our union with Christ; baptism signifies it visibly and outwardly.

### 2. V28 –We should live in unity.

Paul makes a powerful point here, according to him there should be no division in the body of Christ. He addresses: **cultural, social and sexual divisions** in verse 28. These divisions did not come from nowhere; they were deeply rooted in that culture.

*For a typical rabbi would pray: - Illustration*

***“Blessed be God that he did not make me a Gentile; blessed be God that he did not make me ignorant or a slave; blessed be God that he did not make me a woman.” – Alternative prayer of a British person.***

Also, Paul talks about changes in Christian community, but not society on the whole. Broader social change is not a primary concern of his teaching. He wants the gospel to bring down the barriers within the Christian community.

a. **Cultural divisions** are to have no part in the church.

Paul set himself against anything that demanded a cultural or national conversion to Judaism to become a Christian.

No one had to become a Jew to become a Christian.

The gospel was for everyone.

It was available to the Jew or the Gentile (who was everybody that was not a Jew).

Neither one has superiority over the other.

That division was gone. – *Dima does not to become British in order to be a Christian.*

b. One’s **social status** was irrelevant to acceptance in the church.

*Interestingly, in the Roman world, it is estimated that thirty-three per cent of the population may have*

*been slaves.*

Paul makes the point strongly here... whatever social divisions apply in the culture, they do not within the church.

The slave and the free were equals in the church.

c. **Sexual divisions** are to have no part in the church

*An English professor wrote the words, “Woman without her man is a savage” on the blackboard and directed his students to punctuate it correctly. Most of the men wrote it this way, “Woman, without her man, is a savage.” Most of the women, however, did it this way, “Woman! Without her, man is a savage.” – Illustration, and division is going on....*

In this culture, women were considered inferior.

They were talked about in rude and condescending ways.

According to Jewish law, they could not receive instruction about the Torah.

They also were not considered to be reliable witnesses in court.

Simply, they were to tend to their children, and that's it.

But Paul begins to put aside that kind of thought when he places men and women on equal status when it comes to salvation.

*A word of caution must be added!!!. This great statement in verse 28 does not mean that cultural, social and sexual distinctions are actually obliterated. When we say that Christ has abolished these distinctions we mean not that they do not exist, but they do not matter. They are still there, but they no longer create any barriers to fellowship. – I am Ukrainian, deep to my ‘bones’, however I am being accepted by my Christ Church Chineham. We are here not to convert me into a British person, but to work together for the extension of the kingdom of God.*

### **3. V29. We should live like ‘heirs’**

Since the Galatians believers are ‘in Christ’ and since Christ is the seed of Abraham, then it follows that the Galatians believers are also Abraham’s seed. And if they are Abraham’s seed, then they also inherit Abraham’s promise. Abraham’s promise originally thought of in connection to the Promised Land given to the seed of Abraham and but now it is thought of as – a relationship with God that entails his blessing and goodness. Judaizers wanted Abraham’s promise, but they thought that they have to follow the law to get it.

## **III. Analogy and application of ‘sonship’.**

### **1. Gal. 4: 1-2 – Analogy**

Paul has set his basic point about sonship in vv26-29. How he is trying to explain what he meant by drawing an analogy and then applying it. A child who is destined to inherit an estate is no different than a slave as long as he is a child (until 21 to 25). During this period he is subject to the guardians and trustees.

*Illustration. Edward VI, son of Henry VIII and Jane Seymour, was born in 1537. He ascended the throne at age nine, upon the death of his father. A "Council of Regency" would govern until the child came of age. Unfortunately Edward didn't live beyond the age of 16 and so he never fully came into his inheritance.*

### **2. Application**

### **a. Gal. 4:3 – Under the law**

*Paul says that Israel was like the Boy king Edward. They were like children under a guardian, not able to fully access the inheritance. Their Guardian was the law. It was there to keep them out of trouble until the time came for them to receive the promise which God made to Abraham. They were heirs but had not yet inherited the promise. They were under the Law, their childhood was a form of bondage/slavery.*

*What is in it for Galatians church? They were not Jews. What Paul means here, that all humans were spiritual slaves before coming to Christ. We are all in a sense under the Law, even if we have never heard of the Bible or Moses. Why? Because we are all desperately trying to live up to some standards. Our relationship with God is not existent. Being slaves or under the Law is our natural status.*

### **b. Gal. 4:4, 5, 6 – Becoming Sons**

#### **- Through the work of Jesus Christ**

Man's bondage under the law continued for about 1300 years. Coming of Christ is described as fullness of time. Various factors contributed to fullness of time: *Rome had conquered and subdued the known inhabited earth, Roman roads were built to travel around, it was also a time of Greek language being widely spoken, mythological gods of Rome and Greece were losing their hold on society.*

*So, when the fullness of time came Christ did two things v4. God's purpose was both to 'redeem' and to 'adopt' not just to rescue from slavery, but to make slaves into sons. We are not told here how redemption was achieved but we know from **Gal. 1:4** that it was by the death of Christ.*

#### **- Through the work of the Spirit**

God's purpose was not only secure our 'sonship' by his Son, but to assure us of it by his Holy Spirit. He sent his Son that we might have the status of sons, and He send his Spirit that we might have an experience of it.

*Illustration – My wife often asks me: 'How do you feel' or 'you don't understand my feelings'...*

### **Gal. 4:7 – Becoming an Heir**

Paul concludes this stage of the argument .... Saying that we are heirs...

Through the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit we become an heir, ***a son becomes an heir***....

#### **Story....**

*A story of a boy who was born in 1950s' Oklahoma, America.*

*His mother wasn't married when he was born so he had a hard time. When he started school his classmates had a name for him, and it wasn't a very nice name. He used to go off by himself at recess and during lunchtime because the taunts of his playmates cut so deeply.*

*"When He was about 12 years old a new preacher came to his church. He would always go in late and slip out early. But one day the preacher said the benediction so fast he got caught and had to walk out with the crowd. He could feel every eye in church on me. Just about the time he got to the door He felt a big hand on his shoulder. He looked up and the preacher was looking right at him.*

*"Who are you, son? Whose boy are you?"*

*He felt the old weight come on me. It was like a big black cloud. Even the preacher was putting him down.*

*But as he looked down at the boy, studying his face, he began to smile a big smile of recognition. "Wait a minute," he said, "I know who you are. I see the family resemblance. You are a son of God."*

*With that he slapped the boy across the rump and said, "Boy you've got a great inheritance. Go and claim it."*

## **Conclusion**

As Christians are the sons and heirs of God, not through our own merit, nor through our own effort, but through God, through his initiative of grace, who first sent his Son to die for us and then sent his Spirit to live in us. If we are heir then go and live like ones. Go and claim your inheritance that truly and rightfully belongs to you!