

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 9/4/94 PM  
Galatians 4:4-7 "The Privilege of Belonging to God's Family"

**Intro:** It's great to belong to a family, isn't it? I think of the holiday experiences. Take Thanksgiving, for example. I can see in my mind the scene. We turn off State Route 287 onto Monroe Township road 166. There's a cattle pasture on my left. We go a quarter of a mile, and see the mailbox of the place that was "home" growing up. We turn and head down the lane, a one-third mile gravel lane, lined with many of the same wild cherry trees that I walked past years ago when I went to catch the school bus. We see the red barns, the white chicken shed, and the white sided house. We drive around back, park the car, and head for the back door. It'll be unlocked (if it wasn't, the key will be there on top of the fusebox). Even before I walk into the kitchen, I can smell the food. I glance at the refrigerator and see a scad of family snapshots. And then come the smiles and hugs.

It's great to belong to a team, or to enjoy the comradery of a good bunch of associates at work. But it's greater to belong to a family that loves you. And greater still, is a privilege available to all of us--to belong to God's family.

It's a great privilege to belong to God's family! Last Sunday evening, we began a series entitled "The Benefits of Christianity." There are many benefits (in our first study we scanned 5 in Ps 103). This afternoon, we're going to consider another benefit. For those of us who know Christ, we have the privilege of belonging to the greatest family in the universe, God's family.

How did we get in God's family? What made it possible for sinners like us, who were once in the family of Satan, to be adopted into the family of God? And what are the benefits of belonging to God's family? We find the answers to these questions in Galatians 4:4-7.

## **I. How did we get in God's Family? (4-5)**

That's a good question. God's Word answers that question for us here by identifying three steps involved in placing us in God's family.

### A. God sent His Son (4).

V 4 "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son." God sent His Son into the world. Here's a critical question. When? When did He send His Son?

At just the perfect time. When the time was ripe. That's when God sent the babe Jesus to this planet. What made the time so right? It was the "fullness of time." God, in His providence, had prepared the world for the arrival of His Son.

#### 1. The political conditions were right.

If Jesus had come 400 years earlier or later, He would have encountered a world in political turmoil. But in 4 B.C. there was political stability and security. The Romans ruled the world, and boasted of "Pax Romana."

Beyond that, the Romans had developed an elaborate transportation system throughout the world (some roads still exist today). Why was that important?

Missions. The followers of Christ would be able to take the gospel world-wide, because there were roads, and there was peace.

2. The language was right.

One language united the Roman Empire, known as Koine Greek. It was a very precise language. Why was that important? This was the language God would use to record the events of His Son's arrival. This was the language of the book used to present Jesus Christ to the world--the New Testament.

3. The religious conditions were right.

For the Jews, the Old Testament canon was settled. There had been four "silent centuries" with no new revelation from God. In Judaism, there was great interest in matters of theology, with plenty of talk about the Kingdom of God. And feverish anticipation of the Messiah. There was also a great void in the Jewish world, with a whole host of "denominations" (Pharisees, Saducees, Essenes, Samaritans, Zealots, Herodians).

In Gentile religion, there was a great void as well. People were increasingly dissatisfied with the gods and religious practices of their ancestors. There was a spirit of openness to new religious teaching.

4. The social conditions were right.

The tensions between Israel and Rome were high. They erupted in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem. Persecution was eventually unleashed against the Church, forcing Christians to scatter throughout the world. But as they went, they took the Gospel message with them.

Yes, the time was right. The stage was set. At just the right time, God sent His Son. Never forget this. If He hadn't, we would not be in His family today.

How did we get into God's family? Step one--God sent His Son.

B. The Son redeemed us (5).

Why did God send His Son? V 5 "To redeem them that were under the law." Was Jesus' death an accident? Was it an unforeseen mistake? No. Jesus came to die. He came to redeem a people.

What does that mean? When the Son redeemed us, He achieved two results for us. First, His redemption brought us freedom. Notice 1:4, "Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age." Jesus' redemption took care of our great foes: sin, death, and the devil. He became a curse for us (3:13).

The second result of His redemption was that He brought us into a Family. Which brings us to step three.

C. We received the adoption of sons (5).

V 5 "That we might receive the adoption of sons." Notice the connection. Redemption, then adoption. Don't miss this. No redemption, no adoption. If Christ had not redeemed us, we could not be in the family of God. For that matter, if we have not responded to the Christ's redemption, we have not experienced adoption.

Here's the exciting part. What has happened to us because of the redemption of Jesus Christ? We have received the adoption of sons! We are sons of God. We have

the status of sonship. We're in the family, the very family of God! We belong! We who once were alienated are not accepted by God.

How thrilling! Perhaps you're wondering, "Sounds great, but what does it mean? Can you give us some specifics?"

## **II. What are the benefits of belonging to God's Family? (6-7)**

Paul mentions at least four benefits in vv 6-7.

### A. Benefit #1: What we are - "sons" (6)

V 6 "And because you are sons." V 7 "Wherefore, thou art no more a servant, but a son." We have the rights of a son. A slave has no rights. A slave has no possessions of his own. A slave is on the outside, looking in. But a son? A son is a member of the family. The father's possessions belong to him, too. The father's name belongs to him, too.

We are sons of God. That's a great benefit.

### B. Benefit #2: What we received - "the Spirit" (6)

V 6 "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." We learn from Eph 1:13-14 that the Holy Spirit is the "earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession."

The word "earnest" comes from the ancient Greek word which is used in modern greek to refer to the "engagement ring." What is the purpose of an engagement ring? It's a tangible reminder of a promise, a guarantee, a pledge that something even greater is coming.

If we have Christ, we have the Holy Spirit, too. And the Holy Spirit is the guarantee, the down-payment, the deposit who assures us of this. Some day, we WILL receive the rest of the inheritance that Jesus Christ secured for us in His redemption. Guaranteed.

What about now? What does the Spirit do now? He makes possible the third benefit we enjoy because we belong to God's family.

### C. Benefit #3: What we may cry - "Abba, Father" (6)

V 6 "Crying Abba, Father." One of the great privileges of belonging to a family is communication. Did you ever notice how family members talk differently with strangers than they do with each other? When it's just "us," we are "real" with each other. We laugh together, and cry together. We share our feelings (we may even yell!). We have conversations which would be off-limits to non-family members.

Watch this. Because we are in God's family, and because we have His Spirit, we may cry, "Abba, Father." Abba is an Aramaic (and Hebrew) word. It's full of affection. "Daddy."

Because we're in God's family, God is no abstract, far-off, disinterested Deity (as some view Him). He is our Father. And He wants us to talk with Him. In fact, He took the initiative to get the conversation going! He gave us His Spirit, who leads us in prayerful communication with the Father.

But there's more, a fourth benefit.

D. Benefit #4: What we anticipate - "heir of God" (7)

V 7 "And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." We are heirs of the One who created and owns the universe! Think of the resources to which we are entitled! All because of Christ.

II Cor 8:9 "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that we through His poverty might be rich!" We have a great hope, because we are heirs, because we belong to the Family of God.

**Conclusion:**

I have a friend named "Vini" who is a Brazilian who has a special ministry in Brazil. He seeks to find homes for orphaned children. I'd like to read an account from a recent letter. "Recently we worked with the adoption of another group of three siblings..."

What sobering words! "Today my children will become orphans. Would you help find a family for them?"

It's great to belong to God's family! We must cherish the privilege. We must also realize the world is full of people who do not, who need to hear the good news. Perhaps you are not sure that you belong to God's family. Trust Christ today.