

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Galatians 3:25-4:7

Have you ever had an identity crisis? Maybe you were in the midst of moving to a new state, changing jobs, or going through the break-up of a close relationship. How did it feel? There are times in life when we wonder "Who am I, anyway?" Is there any solid relationship that I can "stake" my identity on?

This section of Galatians contains some of the most profound truths regarding who we are in Christ. As you study, remind yourself that these are truths that God wants you to live by on a day to day basis in your relationship with Him.

²⁶ You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

¹ What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ² He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³ So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. ⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵ to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. ⁶ Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

Jewish men in their morning prayers often said, "Thank you God, that you did not make me a woman." Greeks, as well, prayed, "Thank you that I was born a Greek, and not a Barbarian, a human being and not an animal, and a man instead of a woman." How do you tend to rank or categorize people? What do you use, perhaps sub-consciously, as criteria for judging a person's worth?

There were "rites of passage" in the Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures when a boy became a man. The Jewish boy at age 12 became a "son of the Law"; the Greek boy cut off his hair at age 18 and offered it to the gods; the Roman child was taken to the forum at about age 16 for a "toga party". He or she would bring a toy and offer it to Apollo to show that they were putting childish things behind them (hence, Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 13:11).

How is Paul relating these customs to God's overall plan of salvation in verses **4:1-3**?

The "*fulness of time*" was a unique point in the world's history. God did not just randomly choose any old time to send His Son to earth. Many political and cultural factors converged to make this time ripe for the spread of the gospel.

Do some research and see if you can uncover some of those unique factors that truly made the early first century the "*fulness of time*".

Because of the richness of the theological ideas in this passage, take some time to look at these crucial New Testament words:

WHAT DOES SALVATION REALLY MEAN?

The Bible's description of salvation is like a diamond. It uses different words to describe different facets of this new relationship with God. Three of the most important words are found in the book of Galatians: *justification*, *redemption*, and *adoption*. You've probably heard those words before, but what do they really mean?

JUSTIFICATION

Justification is essentially a legal term, used in the law courts. It occurs many times in the New Testament, and at least 8 times in Galatians. **Can you find** all the occurrences? (use a concordance and look for "**justify**")

The Greek word for justification is *dikaioisune*, which is the same root word for "righteousness" and "justice". This is an important link, because justification means "*to declare to be righteous*".

Read Romans 3:26. That one verse uses the terms "*justice*", "*just*" and "*justifies*". God's dilemma was that He was just, and we are unjust. He could not maintain His holy justice and let our sin go unpunished. Someone had to pay the penalty, and so He enlisted His own Son to die. When Christ died, justice was served. Therefore, any person who accepts Jesus' death in their place is "*justified*" - "*declared to be righteous*" by the Father, because their sins have been paid for, and the righteousness of Christ is transferred to their account.

As Paul would later write, "God made Him who had no sin (Jesus) to be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21) God can declare us to be righteous not on our own merits, but on the basis of Christ's righteousness which has been given as a gift to all who believe. It is God's "moral bookkeeping", and it sets us free from death!

REDEMPTION

If justification was a term from the the law courts, redemption is a term from the market place. Again, using a concordance, find all the occurrences of "**redeem**" in the book of Galatians.

The Greek word for redemption is *exagorazo*. It means "to purchase or buy back, to transfer ownership by the payment of a price."

Read the following verses: what do they tell us about redemption?

"For He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:13,14)

"You are not your own; you were bought with a price." (1 Corinthians 6:19,20) Think of what it would feel like to be a slave on the auction block, with no rights, no dignity, no worth except the price someone arbitrarily decides to pay for you. Think of how a prospective buyer would look at you, and how their cold gaze would feel. Then picture Christ arriving and being the first person to see you as a real person, with real worth. How would you react? Imagine Him being willing to pay the price for your ransom, which turns out to be His own death.

John Newton was a well-known slave trader in the 1700's. During a fierce storm at sea, he gave his life to Christ, and later wrote the hymn "Amazing Grace". On his mantel at home he had inscribed a verse from Deuteronomy, in order to remind him of his past and just how much God had done for him: (look up **Deut. 15:15**)

What do you do to remind yourself of how far God has brought you?

ADOPTION

Of these three terms, adoption probably has the most personal feeling to it. The Greek word for adoption is *hiothesia*, from *huios*, which means "son". It is found in **Galatians 4:5** and four other times in the New Testament (Romans 8:15,8:23,9:4 and Ephesians 1:5). From these verses, come up with **your own definition** of *adoption*:

"The roots of "adoption" are found in the Roman rather than in Jewish or Greek culture. The most significant factor of the Roman legal system is the fundamental place given a father's authority. In adoption an individual's old relationships were severed. Old debts and obligations were canceled. The person was placed under the authority of the father of the new family. The father was considered owner of all the adoptee's possessions. The father also had the right of discipline and became liable for the new son or daughter's actions." - Larry Richards

According to **Galatians 4:6**, what is the sign of our adoption?

John Wesley, the famous 18th-century evangelist, was actually in the ministry before he became a Christian, out of a sense of duty and a perfectionistic desire to be holy. He and some friends even started a "Holy Club" at Oxford to try to out-do each other in religiosity! However, his holiness was only external, and when Wesley finally accepted Christ, he looked back upon those days and said, *"I had then the faith of a servant, but not of a son."*

Although it is a privilege to be called a servant or slave of Christ, this passage is emphasizing something else. **Do you** have the faith of a son or daughter?

LIFE RESPONSES

So what? Now that you've studied these words, how have they changed, challenged, or enriched your understanding of salvation?

How do you respond to the idea that God has justified you - redeemed you - adopted you? Which one hits you the hardest? Why?

Share what home was like for you. Did it make it easy or difficult for you to think of God as a father?

Do these truths seem to express any emotion on God's part? Does that surprise you or change your image of God in any way?