

Redeemed to Be Sons and Heirs
July 18th, 2010

Galatians 3:26-29

26 So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, neither 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.

Precisely because we are in Christ through faith we also are part of Abraham's seed, the seed to whom God's promise was made. And by belonging to Christ we are also heirs according to that promise. Remember what Paul identified the promise that we have received as.

Galatians 3:14

14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

We then are Abraham's children through faith. Therefore we are God's children through faith. We have clothed ourselves with Christ Jesus. We are now one united people in Him regardless of our ethnic background, socioeconomic condition or gender. And we have become heirs according to the promise God gave to Abraham 430 years before the law was given to Moses and the nation of Israel.

How do we know that we are heirs of the promise? It's because the Holy Spirit is both the evidence that it is true, and He is the guarantee that we will receive the inheritance in all its fullness.

Ephesians 1:13-14

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Now, for some reason when we read about the inheritance that we have obtained in Christ our minds immediately go to what is going to be ours after *we* die. Why is that? It's as if we have to die to receive the inheritance that's ours in Christ. From a natural perspective, if you have an inheritance, when do you receive it? It's after *someone else* dies! The heir is still very much alive to receive and to enjoy the blessing of what's been left to them.

These passages aren't speaking of us dying and leaving an inheritance. It's not speaking of us dying and obtaining an inheritance. It says that we are heirs to an inheritance that's the result of a promise that God made to Abraham. That promise is now fulfilled in Christ

and the Holy Spirit. Why is the vast majority of the church waiting until they die to tap into the spiritual wealth that is already ours in Christ?

This whole letter to the Ephesians is addressed to a church that is rich beyond measure in Christ Jesus yet is living the life of a beggar because they are ignorant of their own wealth. We are the people of heaven, the people of the age to come living on the earth now in the midst of the present evil age. We can live lives drawing from one of two bank accounts: we can draw from the fallen world around us, or we can draw from treasures of Christ. We access the account of the fallen world through the law and our fallen sinful nature. We draw from the riches of Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Christ has given us a vast treasure of spiritual blessing from which to draw and by which to live our lives and to fulfill our parts in God's grand plan. We are heirs and our inheritance includes the whole of creation, both earth and heaven. That dominion is being recreated by the incredible release of God's love and power that was affected in the resurrection of God's Son and release of God's promised Holy Spirit. We are God's vessels and instruments in that process.

Our part now, as the people of Jesus, is to be God's living signposts that the renewal has begun and that it is on the way to being completed. We are God's instruments in the renewal that will consummate in the summing up of all things in His Son. Given that purpose, we now have an inheritance from which to draw toward that end on the way to the fullness of it.

What then is the evidence of this present tense inheritance and the guarantee of the future consummation of all things in Christ? The evidence and the guarantee is the Holy Spirit! We have become new creatures through Him and by Him we know that we are no longer slaves to any elemental force controlling us. Rather by the Spirit we know that we too are God's sons and daughters.

Galatians 4:1-7

What I am saying is that as long as heirs are underage they are no different from slaves, although they own the whole estate. 2 They are subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by their fathers.

In the culture into which Paul wrote this letter, a child of the estate owner was like a slave in the house. Even though they would one day inherit the entire estate they did not enter into that privilege while they were still minors. They were heirs in waiting under guardianship until such time as their father appointed. We saw in the last chapter what the guardian of Israel was until they as a nation reached the appointed age. What was it? They were kept under, hemmed in, guarded by the law.

Paul's point here is that there was really no difference in this regard between the children of Israel and the gentiles. The Jewish community was like a son who, though heir to the whole estate, had not come into that inheritance while under the guardianship of the law. The son under law was no different than the slave who had no inheritance waiting.

The shocker comes in the next sentence.

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

You would expect Paul to say that the experience of the Jewish nation was that they, while underage, were in slavery to the guardianship of the law. Instead he characterizes the enslaving power as an elemental spiritual force of the world.

So what's clear is that Paul is lumping Jews and gentiles together. They are both like minors under the tutelage of a controlling force. Whether it was the wicked forces who controlled the gentiles or the law which controlled the Jews, both waited for the freedom that only Christ and the Holy Spirit could bring.

The good news is that what neither of those controlling forces could do, God did. The time appointed by the Father for the sons to come to maturity and the fullness of their inheritance did come.

4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

Did you ever wonder why God sent Jesus when He did? Why not earlier? It's amazing the historical events that God brought together in the fullness of time. Alexander the Great conquered the entire Mediterranean world and thus instituted a common language. The Roman Empire came, and into Alexander's domain brought a sense of peace that the world had never known. They connected the various nations by building roads to make their armies' travel easier. But Paul and the other apostles used those same roads to spread the good news of the kingdom.

4 But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

To redeem means simply to deliver and set free through the payment of a price. In one grand stroke God, by sending His own Son into the world, fulfilled His promise to Abraham and set His children, both Jew and gentile free. Gentiles were set free from bondage to beings who masqueraded as gods but were not. Jews were set free from the bondage that was life under law. That's the very life that the agitators wanted to bring the gentile sons under, to make them slaves again to what Christ had redeemed all of God's sons from.

How then do we really know that this is true? How do we know that we are in fact God's sons?

6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer slaves, but God's children; and since you are his children, he has made you also heirs.

God sent Jesus into the world to make our sonship possible. And He sent the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of His Son into our hearts so that we could experience intimate life with our Papa. The Holy Spirit of Sonship cries out in us in the same words of intimacy which Jesus spoke, Abba, Father.

We have been delivered from slavery to be God's children. Slavery is the lowest form of relationship with God. Sonship is the highest. The Fathers' desire for us is for us to relate to Him the same way His Son does. That's His heart.