

There Is One Gospel - Week 7

Galatians 4:1-7

Pastor Matt Dean

As we continue in our series, THERE IS ONE GOSPEL, we will hear this morning the relational implications with God for those who trust in Jesus. We will be reminded again that we have been saved from ourselves, saved from the penalty of sin and that we have been saved TO a relationship with God by this gift of grace — and this gift of grace is to be received by faith.

If you look at the Old Testament - God is referred to as Father around a dozen times — this would always be in reference to his relationship with the nation of Israel, but this changes in the NT when Jesus teaches us to pray “Our Father...”. In the four gospels, Jesus refers to God as our Father around 60 times.

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” AW TOZER

Galatians 4:1–7 (ESV): Sons and Heirs

4 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, 2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. 3 In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. 4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Eric Metaxas makes this observation, “I was doing some work on the lives of famous atheists—just reading about them and so on. Over and over, I kept finding bad relationships with their fathers, and I said, ‘Hey, maybe there’s something going on here.’ Then I found a comment by Sigmund Freud (and I’m paraphrasing), ‘Nothing is more common than for a young person to lose faith in God when he loses respect for his father. This was true of Freud himself. **Nietzsche**. His dad died when he was four, and he never got over it. When he said, “God is dead,” he was really saying, “Dad is dead.” He never claims that his atheism was a rational thing. He said he knew it by instinct¹

¹ Eric Metaxas, *Life, God, and Other Small Topics: Conversations from Socrates in the City*, (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 88-93.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS once said, *It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men.*

Truth be told — there are many broken among us and there were many broken in Galatia. What we think when we think about God is the most important thing for us to get right — and the only way to get this right, is to see the whole counsel of God’s Word, see the order of God’s salvation and recognize by faith what we have been given in the good news of Jesus Christ.

We were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world

- It’s up to you, about you, for you
- Rebellion, self indulgence, self glorification, self satisfaction
- Sin, depravity, deception, idolatry — this is life.

But when the fullness of time had come — God sent forth his Son — born of woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Because you ARE sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts

Crying - Abba! Father!

No longer a slave - but a son.

If a son - then an heir through God.

Jesus tells this story to teach us something so important...

Luke 15:11–32 (ESV): The Parable of the Prodigal Son

11 And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.”’

20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. 25 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' "

The son says you are better off dead to me --- give me what I'd have if you were gone...

Life in the distant country took everything, cost everything, and yet still left him empty

In the Jewish world — feeding pigs would be among the most unclean jobs in the world — lowest of low — but the son even longs to eat the garbage the pigs are eating --- and even then, no one would feed him that.

This is life apart from God, this is life enslaved to the elementary principles of this world. This is what the Proverb writer means when a dog returns to its own vomit.

The son knowing that even his father's servants / slaves had a better life --- comes to his senses. The distant country indeed does not satisfy. Reckless living leads to nowhere.

Debauchery with prostitutes does not satisfy. The distant country led him to the lowest of low places where despite once having riches in his hand, the food of pigs would become appealing. This is the bottom of the barrel.

I will arise and go back. I will say to my Father —
 ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ Treat me like a servant.

And that part is so very accurate — the son indeed has greatly sinned.
 It’s true — he was no longer worthy to be called his son.

And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

While he was still a long way off —
 His father saw him
 His father felt compassion for him
 His father ran (JEWISH MEN DONT RUN)
 His father embraced him
 His father kissed him.

But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’ And they began to celebrate.

The father calls for his best robe and clothes him. No longer covered in shame.
 The father calls for a ring and puts it on his hand — his authority as a son is restored.
 The father puts shoes on his feet - he was not a servant, but a son.
 The father calls for a fattened calf — a great celebration must be enjoyed.

Here’s why: This my son was dead. My son is alive again. My son was lost. Now — HE IS FOUND.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:4-7)

The Father has seen you — while we were far off, while we were still sinners
 The Father does know you — and has long pursued you.
 The Father at just the right time sent His son to redeem you.
 The Father extends a relationship — this gift of grace — to be received by faith.
 The Father says — you belong to me. You can call me Abba, Father in the closest way.

Here is my best robe — the righteousness of Christ.
Here is my best ring - the authority of the Holy Spirit in your life.

Adoption is to be received.

The invitation to see God as Father — is what Jesus has done.

I've had the joy of experiencing fatherhood in three ways, including adoption and foster care. Hands down this has helped my faith more than anything else in life. I feel the weight of loving my wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her — yet as an imperfect father, my own very real imperfections serve as a conduit to see the perfect Father. For me and for my children and for my wife.

I love each of my children more than I can express. They know it.

Many of you know that April and I have been foster parents for the past year. Our family has stepped into a very needed and often very painful reality, caring for children as our own, even though they are not our own. Loving them. Caring for them. Praying for them. Hurting for them.

We have cared for three foster children, and we have the privilege of caring for a little boy right now who has been in our family for almost 6 months. It's a team effort. We are all in.

This little guy is beloved in our home. He brings us joy. We laugh together. He is safe. Prayed for. Provided for. We truly enjoy him... and for as long as he is with us — we will care for him. We know what makes him laugh. We know how to comfort him when he cries... we love him. And...

We also know that we are not in control of his future. We don't get to say what we think is best for him. We can't decide for him. There is a higher authority over us — and his future is in the hands of a state system doing its best in a broken situation. And our hearts and our hands are open in the posture of submission to God. Come what may....

It's all we can do — to love this guy with the love of Christ, and set our hearts and hope on God. But there is pain in the offering... and loving someone well in the face of uncertainty will cost you something.

I need you to hear me say today — that your identity in Christ, your sonship with God is not subject to a state system. Your place at the table isn't up to a social worker, agency, or local judge.

Your identity as God's sons and daughters has been proclaimed by the HIGHEST authority, paid for at the HIGHEST of prices, been determined by the MOST HONORABLE judge, and guaranteed by the HOLY SPIRIT of God. Your hope and your future belong to Jesus. He is your confidence and knowing Him is the goal!

This is why Paul keeps saying there is ONE gospel. This is what Paul was defending — that by grace through faith — we could know God in such a personal way.

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:4-7)

Because of that — we can pray this way.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Honor be to your name.
 Your kingdom come. Your authority is best. We submit ourselves to You.
 Your will be done. Your ways are best.
 On earth As it is in heaven.
 Give us our daily bread. We trust you for what we need.
 Forgive us our debts, our sins, our trespasses - we believe Jesus is enough.
 As we forgive those who sin against us - we can forgive like we have been forgiven.
 Lead us not into temptation — we want to honor you, we want to obey you.
 Deliver us from evil - we live in a broken sinful world.
 For yours is the kingdom - and we belong to you.
 Yours is the power - and we need You.
 Yours is the glory - so help us glorify You.
 Forever and ever.
 Amen. Let it be so.