

XI. The Gospel of Jesus Christ in Biblical Perspective
The Majesty, Message and Ministry of the Gospel

“Adoption: Our Father”

Galatians 3:21-4:7

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December 9, 2012 – Morning Sermon

We are saved by faith alone in Christ alone not let's look at Galatians 3:23 - 4:7 says [23] *Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. [24] So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. [25] But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, [26] for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. [27] For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. [28] There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. [29] And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.*

[4:1] 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.
The grass withers, the flower fades, God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

In the last study I said I had four favorite programs and yet my whole point was to tell you that I basically watch history channels. Then I happen to mention that another program I watch was one where the family always ends at the dinner table. That program is not Duck Dynasty and I now have found out the viewing habits of over half of my congregation. At your request I did watch one episode of Duck Dynasty and that will be the only time I watch that show. The program I was talking about was Blue Bloods where the father's hero is Teddy Roosevelt so there's a big jump from Duck Dynasty to Blue Blood. My whole point in the last study on this was that when I watch the history channel and see a travel log it's great to be able to say “I've been there.”

In this section of our study of the Gospel, the ministry of the Gospel, I'm walking through with you who are Christians your history. You have been called, regenerated, justified and in this study you have been adopted. That is past grace. That is what God is doing. In the next study we'll talk about present grace – what God is doing in your life, sanctification. Then there is future grace – what God will do in your life, glorification. As I walk through this with you there ought to be bells ringing off where you're saying “Wow, that's what happened to me.” I was externally called by the Word and internally called by the Holy Spirit. I was then born again – regenerated. I was then justified – right with God through Jesus Christ and I'm now adopted. So in this study we will look further into our adoption.

Now why I have we focused on the Gospel? We have covered the majesty of the Gospel which is the announcement of the victory of the King. The message of the Gospel is what the King did to save you from your sins. Now we are in the ministry of the Gospel which is what the Holy Spirit is doing to get you to the King as your Lord and Savior. We are doing this because the Gospel is the foundation, formation and the motivation of the Christian life. I love to disciple people on what the responsibilities and privileges of the Christian life are but here's the deal. You can't have the Christian life until you understand the Gospel which is the foundation, formation and motivation of your life.

So we are working our way through His majesty where the King has triumphed and published Glad Tidings. We have looked at the message where in Christ God saves sinners by grace through faith and repentance but here's the problem. That glorious message which is so powerful and wonderful goes to sinners who are dead. How can someone who is dead respond? While the message is the revelation of what God the Son has done to save us, the ministry of the Gospel is what the Holy Spirit is doing to bring us to Jesus as Savior.

So far we have walked our way through Romans 8:29-30 which says [29] *For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* [30] *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.* So we are walking our way through that unbreakable golden chain, those links of redemption that God has done.

What is the ministry of the Gospel? The Gospel ministry of the Holy Spirit reveals how sinners are delivered from the tomb of death and sin to the triumph of Christ and life. It's like when Jesus said "Lazarus come forth." It's like Jesus has reached down with the Gospel Word and the Holy Spirit and called us from the tomb of death and sin to the triumph of Christ and life. How does He do this? I'm trying to keep the narrative of your salvation in your mind so you have this foundation sure and you don't get caught up in trying to work your way to heaven, instead of working for the Savior who is bringing you to heaven. I don't want you to think lightly of sin on your way to heaven but that you hate sin because you love Christ who redeems you from your sin.

I want to go back to the past grace that is at work in your life. The initial work of what the Holy Spirit does with the Gospel to bring you from death unto life is effectual calling. Effectual calling is a process and it comes to an event called conversion. In conversion is the glorious truth that you're born again which is regeneration, born from above. You are justified where you're right with God through Jesus Christ and in this study we are looking at adoption where you have gone from sinner to son, from rebel to son and not just to peace, forgiven and pardoned but from sinner to son or daughter of the true and living God, who is your Father. He is your Father. What an amazing thing to say.

It's absolutely overwhelming when we corporately from time to time will go to that prayer that Jesus used to teach us how to pray. He said to believers, "When you pray" He said something astounding in the Gospel of Matthew that they hadn't heard throughout the Old Testament, "Pray this way" and now the two most astounding words from the Thrice Holy God that I can now say, "Our Father..." It is an amazing thing how

I have been brought from rebellion to a son, from an enemy to a son and the relationship is so intimate that I can say "Father."

Again, I want to draw the line for us. Effectual calling is a process and is the work of the Holy Spirit in which God delivers us from the persuasion of sin. Externally the Gospel Word calls us. Internally the Holy Spirit calls us. Faithful is He who calls you for He will bring it to pass. So the Word is calling from the outside which will always be rejected unless the internal work of the Holy Spirit gives us eyes to see and ears to hear. As He delivers us from the persuasion of sin we are brought to the triumph of a new perspective in Christ where we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

How many times have you heard someone who is joining the church say "I've just never heard the Gospel until I came here" yet I don't want you to get too uppity about that. They may have been raised in a church that didn't preach the Gospel which is unfortunately increasingly true in our culture but they could have actually heard the Gospel but they didn't hear it meaning that God hadn't given them eyes to see and ears to hear. Then the Holy Spirit gave them eyes to see and ears to hear so that they now said "I'm a sinner, He's the Savior. My religion or baptism won't get me to heaven. My sins have the cost of death upon them. I stand under the judgment of God. I can't save myself. I now have eyes to see and ears to hear." So He delivers us from the persuasion of sin to the new perspective of trusting in Christ. I meet people all the time who say to me "Pastor, I'm just not going to surrender." You will surrender. You will either surrender to Jesus for life and freedom or you'll surrender to sin for death, chaos and despair but do come to Christ.

Secondly, the effectual calling process culminates into this wonderful event called conversion. In conversion you have been born again, regeneration. You are born again by the Spirit of God and the living and abiding Word of God. God's Spirit and His Word works so that you are then delivered from the power of sin and you are now given the triumph of a new heart in Jesus Christ. So Christianity is not so much that you give your heart to Jesus but it's that Jesus kills your old heart and gives you a new heart where now you can believe in Christ and repent of your sins. When you believe in Christ you can now come to justification.

In repentance you turn from your sin and yourself to Christ and by faith believe in Him which leads to justification. What is justification? That's when the Lord delivers us from the penalty of our sin and we now come to the triumph of a new record. My old record had sin and no righteousness. Sin was sending me to hell and with no righteousness I can't get into heaven. Jesus goes to the cross and He who knew no sin became sin on my behalf so that I might become the righteousness of God in Him. So I now have a new record. The new record doesn't contain sin and does contain righteousness, the very righteousness of Christ. His blood has paid for all of my sins and they've been wiped away. His righteousness has been given to me so I'm cleansed by His blood and clothed with His righteousness.

So I am called, born again, justified and I have a glorious blessing that is announced to me. I am a part of the family of God. You belong to the true and living Christ. You were born into this world homeless, in the orphanage of sin. I sent My Son to save you and you're now no longer the sinner but My son, no longer the rebel but My son, no longer do I see you as My enemy and you're more than My friend. You are My son. You are My daughter in Christ by faith whom you have put your trust in.

So what is adoption? Adoption is when the sinner is delivered from the position of sin which is orphaned in sin and homeless. Now you're brought and delivered to the triumph of Christ in a new family. It is the triumph of a new family in Jesus Christ. Have you ever seen just how hungry we are for families? Speaking of television programs, many years ago there was a program called Cheers that took place in a bar and it started off with the lead in song that said "Don't you want to be somewhere where everybody knows your name?" We are born alienated from God, from others, we're looking for our identity and we're looking to belong.

Have you ever wondered why identity politics works so well? If you're apart from Christ you're all looking for the hyphenation that will make your life meaningful. I'm a European-American, an African-American, rich American, poor American. I'm in the one percent, the two percent, the ninety-eight percent, etc. I've been listening to all this stuff in politics and it succeeds because people are actually finding identity somewhere. They are all trying to find it somewhere and then people will say "I'm the god who will save you and you're identity. Just put your trust in me." It all works because we're all looking for this identity.

The believer has one identity. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. This is my life and it is in Christ. In Christ there is not Jew and Gentile or male and female or rich and poor or bond and free. In Christ we are one as sons and daughters of the One true and living God and we belong to Him. How did we get there? God freely gave His only Son to make sinners His sons and daughters and bring them into His family. I want to show you this from the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 1:5 says *[5] For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"?* Or again, *"I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"?* So here is the only unique Son of God, the eternal Son of God who was begotten. He wasn't birthed into existence. He was sent forth into existence as He took upon Himself humanity sharing in flesh and blood. Now Hebrews 2:10-13 says *[10] For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. [11] For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, [12] saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise." [13] And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Behold, I and the children God has given me."*

Why did Jesus Christ come into this world? Romans 8:28-29 says *[28] And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. [29] For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.* How did you get into the family of God? It was because the non-duplicated, unique, only, eternal Son of God came into this world. God freely gave Him. You and I didn't deserve Him. We didn't want Him. We needed Him but didn't want Him. God freely gave Him and then He freely gave Himself on the cross so that we might have eternal life in Christ the Lord of glory. That's how we became sons and daughters through God's unique, one and only Son who has come to redeem us from our sins.

How did we come to Him? It is because this Son sent forth the Holy Spirit. God the Father who freely gave you God's Son, now freely gives you the Holy Spirit through His Son to bring you into His family. Here I am dead in my sins. The Father gave His

Son to save me who says “Father, all whom You have given Me I lose not one but will raise them up on the last day.” He has now purchased for us a new perspective, a new heart, a new record and now He brings us to the family of God. How do they get there? They get there because God the Father poured His Spirit upon His Son, who ascended to heaven and poured His Spirit out, who went and found you. The One who bought you on the cross now brought you by the Holy Spirit to Himself. He called you, regenerated you, justified you and then by His Spirit He has sealed you into His family.

What is adoption? The Father has adopted you. How? He did it by the gift of His only Son on the cross. Then He has brought you to the family. How? The Father has originated your adoption. The Son has achieved your adoption and then the Holy Spirit has brought you as an instrument into His family from the orphanage of sin into the family of God, from doing the works of your father Satan into now embracing a new Father, the God of glory. The Thrice Holy is now your Father. That is how He has done that.

If that is what adoption is, then what does it mean? It means five things. The first thing it means is the God of glory is now your Father. Here I am a sinner and no good thing dwells within me. Here is the Lord of glory, Thrice Holy, who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished and this sinner can now say to that God, “My Father, Abba Father.” That is just astounding! That is absolutely overwhelming that I have this God who is my Father. This means I have a Father who is holy and righteous who has intimately bought me and brought me through His Son and by His Spirit. Therefore I can be confident that it is this Father who will always be benevolent to me. Whatever I need to know Him and make Him known He will give to me.

I want to tell you what I’m not saying here. I’m not talking about this word of faith distortion of the Gospel when they say “Jesus died for me, so He’s my Father and I can name it and claim it. I can confess and possess. I can believe it and receive it. I can blab it and grab it.” I am not saying that. Here is the truth. God gave His Son. Romans 8:31-32 says *[31] What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? [32] He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* If God gave His Son why would He not give me anything and everything I need to know Him, love Him and serve Him? I’m not talking about giving me anything and everything I want defined by the world’s value system.

God will give me what I need to know Him, love Him and serve Him which also includes suffering. A true God who is not only my Father, will not only love me to give me the good things I need but will bring to me the discipline I need. Those whom the Father loves He disciplines. If He doesn’t discipline you then you’re illegitimate but if He loves you He’ll discipline you. You may now call God your Father but you may not call Him your grandfather. I know the difference. I have now entered the world of grandfathering. When my grandchildren come over I have one objective and that is we’re all going to have a good time. I know I’ll probably do things I shouldn’t do. I will hand them back to their father who will undo all the things that I just did. That’s the way it works. Most of us are defining God as grandfather, not Father. As a grandfather I don’t discipline. It doesn’t mean I don’t think they need to be disciplined but I’m not the one because I’m the grandfather.

Luke 11:11-13 says [11] *What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; [12] or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? [13] If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!* You want that job don't you? What you don't know is what is hidden in that job. He does and when He says 'no' good fathers say 'no.' It's not because He wants to hurt you but He wants to give you what you should have not maybe what you want to have. Wouldn't it have been nice for Lot to have known that there was a Sodom and Gomorrah in those rich valleys? How many times have you said you need this or that and God says 'no', it's because He's a Father who knows what you need. Sometimes you are asking for an egg but it's a snake. Sometimes you think you're asking for bread but you're actually asking for a stone but He knows exactly what you need. He is now you're Father who loves you, cares for you and disciplines you. He brings all those things you need in your life at just the right time in just the right way because His Son has brought you to Himself.

Do you remember what Jesus said to Mary Magdalene after He was resurrected but not yet ascended? Luke 11:17 says [17] *Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"* He has done this work to bring you into the presence and He must ascend so that you might by the Holy Spirit be brought to Him so that you might have God, the glorious first Person of the Trinity as the Father, through Jesus Christ His only Son, by the power of His Spirit.

Secondly, you are a fellow heir with Christ. This is kind of hard for us. I praise the Lord for our adoption ministry here at Briarwood that gives a wonderful image of this principle of adoption that you are promoting. When the child comes home after being adopted and says "What shall I call you?" In God's family there isn't any doubt on this. You call Him "Father." He is my Father and your Father. Not only can you call Him Father but you can call Him "Abba Father." I don't want to be irreverent here but I have to get the point across. That would be similar to saying "Daddy." There is an intimacy, not only a legal right relationship that you're a fellow heir but there is an intimacy where when you call upon Him you call Him your Father. You are a joint heir.

In the ancient near East when a child was adopted they weren't a second class status. The adopted child automatically went to the level of the eldest child. They were joint heirs. Adoption was a glorious privilege and not simply an accommodation of someone that was needy. It was a glorious privilege to be adopted and you were brought in as a fellow heir. Let's look at Romans 8:13-17 says [13] *For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. [14] For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. [15] For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" [16] The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, [17] and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.* So we have this special relationship calling upon God intimately and forever legally joint heirs with Christ. Therefore with Christ we will rule and reign over all the angels in the new heavens and the new earth.

Thirdly, you have family relationship and responsibilities. Not only is God your Father but all of His children are your sons and daughters. You don't get to pick them.

I'm probably going to shed some controversy here but that's okay. I think the Apostle Paul would absolutely turn over in his grave if he saw our inappropriate bifurcations in the church. I understand that you have to divide over language because you can't worship without understanding. Jewish churches, Gentile churches, Up and inner churches, down and outer churches – when the church of Jesus Christ gets planted in a community it's to reach anybody and everybody and you ought not to be able to explain it socially, demographically or anthropologically. These are a people who are not a people, who have become the people of God and they not only all have God as their Father but they have each other as their brothers and sisters. Yes, we may not all be from the same background but we have the same Savior, same Spirit, same baptism, same Gospel and therefore we ought to know what it means to love one another patiently, kindly, consistently, with no identity politics in the body of Christ. We are one in Christ.

I know it's tough but when we get to heaven it won't be tough. Here's an old well known Irish quote: *To live above with the saints we love, Ah, that is the purest glory; To live below with the saints we know, Ah, that is another story.* I tell people that the church is like a hot dog. It tastes great but you just don't want to watch it getting made. I'm probably going to get a little more controversial here. Some of you dishonor this because you play drive-by church where you just go to hear the sermon you want to hear. We are not a drive-by church. We are brothers and sisters committed in a covenant community bound together to love one another in Christ and it's not where am I going to get my next sermon. I am not diminishing the importance of the preaching of the Word of God. When I'm a part of the family of God I have responsibilities to my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Having said all that I want to say this. Just in case you think I have an axe to grind, I don't. I stand in amazement of your sacrificial love for one another here at Briarwood. I know we're not perfect but I see it all the time but let's press on and do with even greater excellence what He has called us to do so that when people look at us they won't say "Is that the conservative church? Is that the rich church? Is that the poor church?" No we want them to say "My, how they love one another." That's what we want them to see. From across the spectrum of this parish we minister there will be men and women of every possible stripe, sinners saved by grace.

Fourthly, you have the direct, personal and immediate relationship through God's Word and prayer. Your Father speaks to you in His Word. Hear it preached and read it. Then you get the privilege to call out to Him in prayer through His Son crying out "Abba Father!" I hesitate to do this because I feel us being so irreverent about God but I want to get the point across. There is the transcendence that God is holy but there is also the imminence of Daddy, Father, I believe, help my unbelief. I don't how to pray about this. I need wisdom on this. Call upon your Father.

Fifthly, the last blessing is the sealing, transforming and assuring presence of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of adoption has been poured out upon you. He seals you into Christ. He is transforming you to be more like Christ. The Spirit of God, the Spirit of adoption is within us, bearing witness with us that we are the children of God. I John 3:1-3 says [1] *See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. [2] Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet*

appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. [3] And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

Do you remember your own daddy telling you that you'll know more when you grow up? Just wait until you get to the new heavens and the new earth. Eye has not seen and ear has not heard what your Father has for you but you have it already because you have Christ and Christ has you. He is yet to appear but He is now yours, not yet have you seen it in all of its glory. One day you will, no longer with the eyes of faith but the eyes of sight for your Savior, your Elder Brother has gone away to prepare a place for you and He has sent the Holy Spirit who has sealed you into the family, transforming you to become more like Him on your way to be with Him. He is growing assurance within you, bearing witness with you and telling you that the best is yet to come.

So here is the takeaway. When calling starts in your life, effectual calling initiates unstoppable and relentless Gospel movement of God's grace in the life of a sinner which inevitably results in a changed life. When the Gospel comes through external calling, the Holy Spirit comes which is internal calling, and the sinners are saved by grace with a relentless, unstoppable movement where God's grace is moving and working, changing us rationally, emotionally and volitionally so that we get a new perspective. We are brought to saving faith in Jesus Christ. There is a Spiritual change through regeneration. There is a legal change through justification. There is a relational change through adoption into the family of God so please don't leave this without coming to Christ.

If you go from here you're going to go to the religions of this world. You will worship and believe something. Whatever you go to will be an orphanage. Do you know what happens when adults go visit an orphanage? When adults would come, word would go out to the orphans that there were people coming that may be adopting. They would then tell each other to be on their best behavior. Mind your manners. So if you leave Christ and this Gospel message you'll go out into the world and embrace something in which you'll be performing the rest of your life, hoping there is some god that will adopt you and take you home.

I'm telling you about a God who sent His Son to die for you. You don't have to perform to get into His family. His Son did it for you. He paid for your sins. He gives you His righteousness. God's grace that has been poured out upon you will change you. You will grow in grace. You will have a changed life but you're not doing that to get God as your Father. You're not doing that to get into His family. You're doing that because you're in His family, because He gave His Son. You're changed life isn't to get adopted, it's because you have been adopted. You have been brought from the orphanage of sin into the family of God through the death and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ, by the power of His Spirit that has brought you. Please, don't leave here without this relationship. You need this relational change but it won't happen until there is a legal change through justification. That won't happen until there is a Spiritual change through regeneration. That starts with calling and I on behalf of Christ call you today, "Come home."

There was a prodigal in a pig's trough, clothed with all the filth of uncleanness and he rose up to go home. He wondered what his father would do. His father was not waiting for him with open arms. Go read the story in Luke 15. His father ran to him with open arms. The Father through His Son, Jesus Christ has run to you. He rejoices in your redemption. Come home. Kill the fatted calf. Bring the celebration. Here is the robe.

Here is the ring. My son is home! There was an elder brother who thought you got into the family by how well you did. He looked disdainfully at both his father and his younger brother but I tell you today there is another Elder Brother, not this self-righteous arrogant one who didn't understand grace.

This other Elder Brother was perfectly righteous and He doesn't look with disdain when you come. He actually went to the pig trough and died for you so that you could come. His name is Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. He will love you. He will set you free from your sins. He will give you a new perspective, a new heart, a new record, a new life, and a new family. God is your Father. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the moments we could be together in Your Word. O God, our God, I pray and ask that there would be something that resonates in the hearts of the people that are reading this and they're saying "That's me, that's me, I was called, regenerated, born again, justified and I'm adopted. I belong to You. I'm a joint heir with Jesus Christ. The Spirit of adoption is bearing witness with me and Father, there is more to come when I'm brought into Your Presence and finally home." We praise you Father. My heart is burdened today for those who are reading this and haven't been adopted because they haven't been justified and born again but they have heard today the call. O sinner, come to the Savior and become sons and daughters in the forever family of God. O God our God, I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.