

God's Children in Christ

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[0 : 0 0] Morning everybody. Well I wonder if you can remember when you were at school who the cool kids were. I certainly can and I have to admit I was not one of them. They often let you know in no uncertain terms who they were. Often it was the way that they dressed or the way that they talked or the way that they walked and especially in our case it was the way they treated others and the things that they insisted on for you to have a chance of being in their entourage. So in my school having the right shoes was really important and sadly Clark's wasn't and I had Clark's shoes and if you had a bag you had to carry on your right shoulder and it was also essential to wear a denim jacket rather than your blazer. We all wanted to wear our denim jacket so that we all look really individual which is quite ironic now to think about it. But instead of smoking and hanging around at the bike sheds with all the cool kids and going to wild parties, me and my mates were mostly seen hanging around together, having sleepovers, watching neighbours and dirty dancing videos and doing our homework. I did however manage to get my mum to buy me a denim jacket but she wouldn't let me wear it to school so I had to put it in a bag, walk around the corner and then take the blazer off and put the jacket on. So I hope she's not listening to this actually. And I never really got invited to hang out with the popular kids to go to you know great gigs or shows or anything like that. And one of my favourite series on TV is the Derry

Girls and it's set around the time that I was a teenager and I think my life resembles Erin and her friends. I think my my life kind of resembled theirs but I do have to be honest as an adult now looking back I think that my time there was a bit more fun, you know their lives a bit more fun than all the cool kids.

But to be in the in crowd you have to do everything their way, whatever it was or you couldn't be seen with them. And it's very much like this in the book of Galatians which Margaret's been reading from today.

Paul has gone there, he's established a new church and then he's left them to continue with his work and that's when the trouble starts. Because there's a new group that shows up that were Jews beforehand and they're insisting on things being done differently to the way Paul had taught. They'd been talking about Jesus but they'd also been insisting and demanding things and saying that these relatively new believers were not true or proper Christians.

[2 : 5 0] They weren't part of the in crowd. They were criticising those believers because they weren't following certain parts of the Jewish law. One of them is that they should have been circumcised they thought.

And so they've been told that they're missing out, that they're not proper Christians. But Paul in his letter is really black and white. He's called it plainly and boldly to say that actually if you're putting extra stuff onto the gospel it's hypocrisy and it's not the gospel at all.

That the gospel plus anything equals nothing. The part that we're reading today of Galatians is what Paul's been building up to in his letter so far and it's kind of the culmination of what has gone before.

This is the letter where Paul is addressing strongly some of the issues and the false teachings that are facing the Galatian church. And here today we read of the positive and the glorious truths that the gospel's laid out before us that we are children of God.

And in Paul's eyes it's key. And if he thinks if the Galatian church understands and gets this phenomenal truth then those issues that these Judaiser people are trying to put across will be seen for what it is as being false.

[4 : 0 4] And this I think is the heart of the Christian message, this passage. So to start with let's see what all the believers are children of God. So verse 26 says, With me you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

So this is a new idea that Paul's been introducing in his letter that we are all children of God. When we hear the word son or daughter, by definition that talks about a relationship.

Now it's Father's Day today as we know and we've been celebrating this morning and thanking God for some of the wonderful fathers that we've had, that we still have. And that's really important to do. But I am aware for some people, not all fathers are great. And some of us have had and continue to have difficult and challenging relationships with our fathers. And the impact of that can be quite negative even now as adults.

But imagine that you are the son or daughter of the best dad ever. Both when you're a child and when you've been growing up. You've got a great bond and you spend time together. You respect him.

[5 : 13] And you know that he's always got you back and he loves and supports you. Despite the trouble you got into as a teenager. And despite the pain that you still can cause as a grown adult with your own children.

And it sounds like a really pretty good dad to me. But what Paul's talking about is something even more fantastic than this. It's a mind-blowing truth that we are all children of God.

We can have that closer relationship with him and therefore call God as our father. But we can all be part of his family. And this is not just something that's universally given.

It's not just true in a general way. Just because we've been born in the image of God. It's true when we become a Christian. As it reminds us in 26. You are all children of God through faith.

Faith in Christ Jesus. So we can only be children of God when we've got faith in Jesus. Faith is loving and trusting him. Trusting that he is who he says he is.

[6 : 15] That he died for my sin and my rebellion against God. Trust that I'm safe from God's judgment through him dying on the cross. And trust that he did rise again and he's alive and reigning today.

And vitally I need to remember, and we all need to remember, that it's not because of my ability or my worthiness or the good deeds that I do. It's all about Jesus and what he's done.

And as a believer, it's not something that we're aiming at. It's not something for the future that we can attain. It's actually here right now if we're a Christian. And this is in sharp contrast to what has gone before.

With being made children of God through faith in Jesus. We're now new creations. And that is different to what we were beforehand. As I've said before, this is kind of a culmination of what God's been writing before.

And so this idea of being children of God is mentioned here, I think, precisely because it's in sharp contrast to what he was saying the believers used to be. He said that before we believed, we used to live under the supervision of the law.

[7 : 16] We were held by it. We were locked up by it. We were prisoners of it. And elsewhere in the letter, he says it's like living in slavery. And then in verse 25, it says that it's no longer the case.

Because as believers, we've become part of his family. And we've been adopted by God through faith in Jesus. So we can now live free from slavery and imprisonment.

Free from the sentence of God's law. Free from the power of sin. And free because we've been rescued. And free because we're now children of God. And so we're also free to live like children too.

That's what verse 27 is all about when it says, And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ like putting on new clothes. So Paul is saying that through faith, believers are clothed with Christ.

We're dressed in the Son of God so that we are children of God. And it's the same for us in everyday life. If Terry would like to show me these two pictures. If we see this picture here, if we see a...

[8 : 20] It's okay. If we see a woman dressed like that, we know that she's a police officer. And if we see a guy dressed like that, we know he's a fireman.

Or a fire person, sorry. Or they're going to a hen or stag party. But yeah, that's what we know. And it's the same for us as a believer. We're no longer dressed in our own sinful selves anymore.

But we're dressed in the Son of God. And we are the children of God. Because we are new creations. And so, as we've said before in this series, our prime identity is to be found in Jesus and nothing else.

Our closeness to him can never change. Moment by moment, he's with us. We need to be aware of that. And our attitudes and our outlook should reflect this. Just as our clothes cover us, so Jesus cover us with his righteousness.

So, when our heavenly father sees us, he sees us as his children. And he has redeemed us. And it's a reality for us now.

[9 : 22] This is a new life as children of God. And we don't need to do anything extra to be a true believer. So, Paul, I think, here is getting quite bold in calling the Galatians foolish in chapter 3.

Because he thought they already knew this. He thought he'd been really playing in what he was teaching them. But clearly, they'd forgotten. So, it's not like maybe sometimes we rush out into the cold and we forget to put a jumper on.

Or we're going for a job interview and we have to wear a really great tie to look acceptable to God. We are already properly ready and completely acceptable to him. Because we are his children.

And it's all because of Jesus and his work on the cross, not us. But Paul doesn't stop there. In verse 28, he said, There is no longer Jew nor Gentile, slave or free, male and female, for you are all one in Jesus Christ.

And I think it's a point that he's making repeatedly to the Galatians through the book. It lies behind everything Paul is saying in his letter. That all believers have this new status before God.

[10 : 26] There's none of the cultural or class or gender divisions that society or religion may have been put on people at the time. And so, there's no kind of different levels or hierarchy of believers.

There's not his favourite or preferred ones. There's not more worthy Christians than others. We're all one in Christ if we trust in Christ. However, we all do have different roles that we carry out as believers.

And also, he's not saying here that we can just ignore the Bible's teaching or morality or sin if we're a believer. However, Paul is making it clear here that all believers, whoever we are, through children of God, only through faith in Christ.

We're all in Christ together. And we're all one because of him. And we shouldn't have any divisions. So, in our style of worship here as Christians, that shouldn't be a division. If we live in a council house or we live in a palace, that shouldn't be a division either.

And whether we've been coming here for decades or we're brand new here, that shouldn't be a barrier. True believers should not have divisions among themselves. And we need to really remember this because Paul was writing to the Galatians at obviously a time where their thinking and their attitude was faulty.

[11 : 36] And so, it can be really easy to think that here, others at Christ Church, that we might not have that problem. But actually, we may well do. And so, we need to keep asking ourselves, what is our mindset like?

Are we like this? Can we sometimes be divisive? We need to keep bringing it back to the cross and reminding ourselves that through Jesus, as believers, we're all equal in our status before God.

But that's not all. He goes on into verse 29 and says, And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs and God's promise to Abraham belongs to you.

So, again, Paul is picking up on something that he's talked about already in chapter 3. When he explained how God's promises were not just given to Abraham way back in Genesis, but to all of his descendants.

And I think that's the whole point as we go on to chapter 4, verse 1, of what he's trying to say to us. And it says, Think of it this way. If a father dies and leaves an inheritance for his young children, those children are not much better off than slaves until they grow up.

[12 : 40] Even though they actually own everything their father had. So, from this, I think he's saying that it's a father who's in control. He's left it to us as a trust for the child because he knows his child and he knows what's best for them.

The father is going to be the one that's going to set the time for when the child can inherit. And it's the same, I think, in the big plan of God's salvation for us. As we see in the next few verses, verses 3 onwards.

And that's the way it was before Christ came. We were like children. We were slaves to the basic spiritual principles of the world. But when the right time came, God sent his son, born of a woman, subject to the law.

God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law. So that he could adopt us as his very own children. So God is the one that's in control. He knew of the slavery, that humanity was into sin.

And it's only possible for us to belong to Christ if we're redeemed by Christ from that slavery to sin. And that's only possible through God's work through Jesus. So that was true for the Galatian church then.

[13 : 45] And it's true for us in 2023. Even if we're good, we're never perfect. And we cannot live those lives on our own. And even if we think that we're free, actually we're still enslaved.

Because we're anxious and we're burdened. And we can't control our thoughts and desires for very long, can we? So slavery to sin and our desires, in fact, is our natural state. And so the verses following should be really wonderful to us.

That Jesus, uniquely as a perfect man and a perfect God, came into this world and was able to keep that law. And most amazingly to redeem us. And that means that if we are a Christian now, we've been released because Jesus paid the full price for us by his death on the cross.

So that we don't have to live in that slavery anymore. And we don't have to live with the consequences of the slavery anymore. And in chapter 4, we're reminded of the amazing privilege that we have because of this.

When he says, So just as children that have been fully adopted legally will inherit whatever their parents leave behind, so too, we as adopted children of God will inherit all that God's got for us.

[15 : 02] And because it's Jesus who brings about the fulfilment of these promises, and because it's Jesus who redeemed us, then we get to enjoy the fulfilment of these promises too. And we get some small tasters, don't we, already, of what it's going to be like.

We get to enjoy the creation that we see around us. We get to be able to spend time with brothers and sisters, other brothers and sisters all over the world and in this country. And we also get to enjoy the privilege of knowing our Heavenly Father through his word in the Bible and talking to him in prayer, welcoming his Holy Spirit and singing his praises here on Sundays.

And we get to acknowledge that our sins are fully forgiven, even those that we haven't even committed yet. And finally, he says in verses 6, And because we are his children, God sent his Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call him Abba Father.

So we are now children of God and he is our Father. He sent us the Holy Spirit into our hearts to be that driving seat of the car of our lives that I talked about a few weeks ago, the core of ourselves.

Just as Jesus spoke to his Father like this, now we're enabled to enjoy the same privilege. And you know what, he really wants us to talk to him about our worries and our concerns and our joys and our excitements, because he really wants to listen to us.

[16 : 24] And then verse 7 finally says, Now you are no longer a slave, but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

We need to really remember that. So why don't we just take a moment to just quietly talk to Jesus and thank him that we are his children and thank him that we are no longer slaves to fear.

So thank you, God. I pray that the knowledge that we are your children, Lord, and that we are free, would soak in every one of our hearts through faith in Christ.

Help us to live as your children today, to live with love for you as our Father, to live with worship of you as our Father, enjoyment of you as our Father.

And God, we want to please you. We want to glorify you and want others to know you as Father.

Thank you that we adopted into your family and help us to really want others to be adopted too.

[17 : 36] So help us to pray to live today so that others might know this grace of what it means to be in your family. God, we praise you for adoption as your children and we pray that you would use and bless our lives, that many more people would be adopted as your children because of our lives.

We pray this in your name, Jesus. Amen. Amen. Amen.