

Redeemed to be Sons

Galatians Series

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Bible Text: Galatians 4:1-11

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I am going to start reading at Galatians 3:26 and read on through 4:11.

For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.¹

Oh, heavenly Father, I pray that you would bless the preaching of your Word this morning. Amen.

¹ Galatians 3:26—4:11.

This rich text is jammed with doctrinal truth as we will see. But one of the things that comes out so clear in this passage of Scripture is that there are only two kinds of people in this world. And that is there are sons who are adopted and then there are slaves. And what that means is that this world is a gigantic orphanage of childless children. The billions of people that populate earth, most of them are living in an orphanage because they have no father. They have not been adopted. They have not become sons.

On the other hand, there are some with an inheritance made in heaven. One of the things it speaks so clearly about is that this world is a gigantic orphanage full of the fatherless of this world. This text has the doctrine of the trinity, the doctrine of adoption, the doctrine of sonship. It is just full, full of things that are so helpful for us to understand about the world in which we live. And I pray that as we go through this today we would be able to see all the things that are facing us in our life through this grid of adoption and sonship and inheritance that so fills this passage of Scripture. It is a wonderful text.

Galatians four shows how God has schemed in order to bring many sons to glory. The themes of Galatians continue on here and one of them is that God gives sinners the law to lead them to Christ. And once they are his everything changes and they become sons and they are adopted and they have an inheritance in the heavens. They have a completely new identity. They now have a Father. They are connected to their Father. And they have a Father in this world even though they, perhaps, had an inadequate father personally in this world. They have a Father. They have an internal inheritance and they become heirs of Christ. They have a new song in their hearts and the Spirit cries out in their hearts, “Abba, Father.” And yet they have a danger and that is that they would turn back to law keeping for their acceptance before God; they would turn back to the beggarly elements of this world in an attempt to gain their salvation.

And for that reason the apostle Paul says, “I am afraid for you.”²

And we also find the whole doctrine of shepherding. What do shepherds do in shepherding a flock? Here the apostle Paul is afraid for the flock because they become proud in their law keeping. Yes, they have been keeping laws. They have been circumcised and they have been doing the things that good Jews did, but they think that it has gained their salvation. And so the apostle Paul is afraid for them.

It is appropriate for shepherds to be afraid for the flock because there are wolves that would shred them and tear them to pieces. And the apostle Paul is saying, “Here is a wolf among you. If you think for a minute that any of your law keeping gets you any acceptance by God, you can forget it forever.”

And he says that over and over and over again in the book of Galatians.

And also notice that the text that we are in today, chapter four verses one through 11, it continues to answer a question that was posed back in verse 19 where the apostle asks the question, “What purpose, then, does the law serve?”³

² Galatians 4:11.

And, of course, he has been proving in many ways that obedience to the law cannot save you. And he is also answering the question, “Well, then, why do you need the law if it doesn’t save you?”

And this is the whole argument of the apostle Paul in Galatians three through four. And in chapter three, you know, Paul has been arguing that the singular purpose of the law in this chapter as he explains it is to lead us to Christ. The law convicts us of our sins and we find ourselves bankrupt before God. We have come to the realization by a work of the Spirit in our hearts that we cannot save ourselves by the works of the law.

And so he uses the law to bring us to Christ. And God takes us by the hand through his law and leads us to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

So in chapter three verses 19 on, we learn that the law was added because of transgressions. We learn that it was designed to be fulfilled in Christ in verses 19 and 20. We note that the law is in harmony with all of the promises of God in verse 21. And we know at the end of verse 21 that it does not and never did give life to anyone who obeyed it. We learn in verse 22 that it confines believers under sin and helps them to know of their true nature and their condemnation before God. In verse 23 we learn that the law keeps us under a guard and protects us. It threatens and terrifies us so that we don’t destroy our lives while we are unbelievers. And then in verses 24 and 25 we learn that it was a tutor to bring us to Christ. And then in verse 26 up through this whole section that we are in today, we learn that the law brings you to sonship.

So the law has a blessed and often terrifying ministry in our lives.

Last week we answered the question, What do you do with the law? And we went to 2 Corinthians chapter three and saw that Moses was appointed to teach us the gospel. We saw that whenever Moses is read by a converted heart, the veil is taken away and you are transformed from glory to glory, from this one kind of glory of the law to the glory of Jesus Christ.

And so we, with unveiled face, “are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory.”⁴ And, as a result, we are an aroma of life to those who are saved and we are also an aroma of death to those who are dying without Christ.

And so what this text teaches us here in Galatians is that God has used the law to bring us to sonship. God has used the law to preach the gospel to us in shadows.

I was reading this week in J. G. Miller’s *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* and he says that “Much of the theological framework needed to understand the significance of Jesus’ coming life and death was put in place by Moses in his writing and perhaps, above all, in

³ Galatians 3:19.

⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Deuteronomy. For it is here that the theology of blessing and curse which lies at the heart of Jesus' sin bearing work is first articulated.”

Do you hear what he is saying? It was Moses that began to preach the gospel. We know the gospel was preached to Abraham centuries earlier. But the gospel was also preached through Moses in shadows. And he continues. “It is here that the hopelessness of humanity, trapped in sin even when chosen by God is exposed. It is here that the prospect of divine intervention so radical that it changes people at the very core of their being, it first appears in Moses.” And that is absolutely true, that God has used Deuteronomy and really all of the law to lead us to Christ, that the gospel would be seen there.

And now as Paul says to the Corinthian Church, the church which really desired to reject the law of God, “When you read Moses—and you should read Moses—the veil is taken away and you will be transformed from glory to glory.” And that is one of the proper uses of the law of God.

Now in this text we see how the threatenings of the law, the condemnations of the law, they lead us to Christ. And they lead us to understand that we have an inheritance in heaven. So pick up with me in verse 18. I want you to see how Paul is continuing this idea of inheritance and sonship and how a person becomes a son.

He says in verse 18, “For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”⁵

So he is speaking of our eternal inheritance.

And then in verse 26 he says, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.”⁶

And then the very last verse in chapter three tells us what he will really flourish in more detail in chapter four. He says in the last words in chapter three, “...and heirs according to the promise.”⁷

What does it mean to be an heir and what does sonship and adoption have to do with you? He explains this in chapter four.

In verses one through three he speaks about the idea that there are slaves and that there are heirs. He says:

Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards

⁵ Galatians 3:18.

⁶ Galatians 3:26.

⁷ Galatians 3:29.

until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.⁸

So in these first three verses, we are learning about the nature of the new covenant and how it is contrasted with the old covenant. And the Old Testament was like a time of childhood. It was like being in elementary school. But in the fullness of time, you outgrow your elementary education. You had the ABCs in the old covenant but there is a time when you shed the ABCs. But there is a time when you become heirs. It comes when you cease to be a child, but you become an heir of Christ.

And he is, of course, speaking of the sacrifice of Christ which when he bled and died on the cross at that time retroactively all of Israel was saved through his work on the cross and they were transformed. And so the elect here in this text, before they believe are considered heirs. In other words, the elect in Israel were considered to be heirs of God at that time even though they did not have complete understanding.

And these heirs, or would be heirs, were placed under guardians and stewards. They were placed under the law. And the law was protecting them by its very nature. And so the Old Testament saints were under the care of the law of God until the Son came. They were also given the gift of faith, faith as of Abraham. Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness. Abraham was saved by faith.

And so God uses the faith of Abraham and the proper use of the law in the Old Testament to usher slaves into sonship. You see how God loves to protect his people, how his plan spans across the ages - not a plan that we would conceive, for sure. But it was a plan to reveal his love to mankind, first, through the old covenant and then through the new covenant that we are reading about here.

In the Old Testament time, they were as children in bondage under the elements of the world. That means that many believed that they were saved by their works and their hearts deceived them in it. They were under bondage and they believed that salvation was under the law.

The Lord Jesus Christ spoke of that over and over again when he confronted the Pharisees. The Pharisees really believed that they could keep the law. They were wrong. They never were able to keep the law. But they placed themselves under a bondage of law keeping that was completely impossible because only one ever kept the whole law and that was Jesus Christ himself.

So verses one through three begins to introduce this idea that in the old covenant and the new covenant there is a change. And then in verses four through seven, we see that slaves are transformed into sons. And there is a heart cry of adoption as sons as a result. And here we find ourselves in the section in Galatians four where we learn so much about adoption.

⁸ Galatians 4:1-3.

So many in our church have adopted children and here I think there are so many insights for all of us who have ever adopted children. The doctrine of adoption always has a double meaning. God so desires the adoption of sons and daughters and he has ordained it that the whole world would be an orphanage, a great orphanage of people without a father, without help, without a cry in their heart that would say, "Abba, Father," children with no daddy, children with nothing. All they have is just a drive for obedience, yet without love in the world, yet without the tenderness of Jesus Christ.

From this text, I would like to give you four things that happen in adoption as sons. And you might think about it, those of you who have adopted children. What does this mean for you?

Number one. When you are adopted you have a new legal status. You cease from being a slave and now you are a son. You are taken from privation and you are brought into abundance, the abundance of sonship.

Secondly, you get a new identity. If you are adopted you now have a father. Imagine the billions of people in this world and they have no father or imagine little children in a physical orphanage in this world. They have no father. And adoption gives you a completely new identity and a name. He gives you a name that can continue on, that is connected with someone, someone who will protect you, someone who will care for you, someone who will heal your wounds and walk with you, who will instruct you, who will be devoted to you, who will say, "I will never leave you or forsake you." That is adoption. When you get a new name, it is hooked to the name of our God and our Father.

Paul says, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father from whom all the family are named." You are named after your Father in heaven.

And so adoption changes your identity and gives you a father.

Number three. It gives you a new heart cry and you cry out, "Abba, Father." When you are a slave out in the vast orphanage of this world you don't have this in your heart, that lovingly and sweetly cries out to God for salvation and for help. Now you have a new heart cry, "Abba, Father."

And then, fourthly, you have a secure inheritance. It is for our Father in heaven to give us an inheritance. So also do earthly fathers adopt and they give children an inheritance that never could have an inheritance on their own because they had no father.

Do you see the glory of heavenly adoption? Do you see how wonderful it is to rescue a child off the street and give him a new name and a new legal status and a new heart cry and an inheritance that will never pass away? This is the glory of adoption as sons.

Those of you who have adopted children, think of this. This is what happened to you. You think so tenderly about your own children, but don't forget to think about you who

have adopted have been adopted. What a marvelous thing. You are now sons. And you have been granted such amazing riches in the heavenly places in Christ.

And so we are instructed about how this adoption happens. And he gives so many details to us about how and when it happens and many nuances to it.

First of all, notice the timing of it.

Verse four. “But when the fullness of the time had come...”⁹

That is when it happened. It happened in the fullness of time when Jesus Christ came and he suffered and he sacrificed his life for those orphans of this world who had no father.

Now, among the Romans, a father had authority to set the time of the son’s inheritance. And he could do it at any time. He could do it whenever he felt the son was ready for the inheritance. And it was different from son to son. There wasn’t a magical age. And yet with God, he set the time. He set the time of adoption of sons. He set the time of his son. He had it in the fullness of time.

It was the perfect time. He entered in the world in a perfect time and he saved you at the perfect time.

Brothers and sisters, don’t lament the day of your salvation that it was so late. It happened when God ordained it to happen. Yes, you can look back and say, “I wish I had not destroyed so much of me and everyone around me.” But yet your salvation happened in the fullness of time. He rescued you at the right moment. He opened your heart and your heart began to cry out, “Abba, Father,” and he did it out of his wisdom. He appointed the time of his son and he appointed the time of your salvation.

So the timing of it is spoken. That really marked the incarnation as really the time of reformation that was summed up in the cross of Christ.

The origin of his coming is also spoken of here.

“God sent forth His Son.”¹⁰

And that means that the coming of Christ which caused the adoption as sons was originated in the heart of God the Father. Think of the tender hearted Father that we have who would send his Son into this vast orphanage of billions of people to save them. And God ordained it. If anyone has any doubts about the tender hearted love of our Father in heaven, notice that it was God who sent his Son.

And then it tells of the way he came. He came born of a woman. That declares his humanity. He was fully man and he was fully God. And this speaks of the doctrine of the

⁹ Galatians 4:4.

¹⁰ Ibid.

virgin birth. And then we notice the accomplishment of his coming, “To redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”¹¹

And then we see the effect of it.

“And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’”¹²

The effect of your adoption is that God took the person of his Spirit—and I am being very careful with this language here—God sent the person of his Spirit, not a force, not an influence. He sent the personality of his Holy Spirit into your heart. And once he was there, at the moment of your adoption he started crying out, “Abba, Father.” He himself, he the person of the Holy Spirit, not the influence, not the force of the Holy Spirit, but the person, the very third member of the holy trinity was sent into your hearts to cry out there. You hear that voice, don’t you? All the time. He is constantly crying out.

There is a person in your heart sent from heaven so that in your adoption you would know that you are adopted. If there is a person crying out in your heart, “Abba, Father,” you have been adopted by Jesus Christ.

That is the effect of it. Sonship is real. It is practical. Something happens in your heart when you become a son. Not only is just a legal change, but there is also a spiritual change. And there is a response of joy. You know what that is like. You wake up in the middle of the night and you cry out, “Abba, Father.” And you get up in the morning and you say, “Oh, Lord,” and you say many things at those times.

But there is a person who has been sent into your heart that would cry out.

What amazes me about this is that there is nothing in us that would cause God to want to adopt us, nothing. Our brother Peter Bradrick was in an orphanage in Haiti and saw hundreds of orphans as he walked the streets of Port au Prince two weeks ago. And was there anything about these children that would make you want to adopt them, except, perhaps, the love of God? But there was nothing in them. Many of them were born into paganism. Many of them practice voodoo having done it their whole lives. They are dirty and diseased. Who would want to adopt like that?

But God does. God adopts like that. He adopts those who are dead in their trespasses and their sins.

Now in verse six is contained an argument for the entire doctrine of the trinity. The doctrine of the trinity is not spelled out in absolute clarity anywhere in Scripture. In other words, you never find a verse that says, “Believe in the doctrine of the trinity and here is what it means.” But you find it implicitly spoken of and implied very clearly in many, many texts of Scripture and this is one of them right here.

¹¹ Galatians 4:5.

¹² Galatians 4:6.

If you know anyone who is anti trinitarian, go to Galatians 4:6 and they will see it. There is a distinct mention of three persons. They are not forces. They are not influences.

“And because you are sons, God...”¹³

That is the first person of the trinity.

“...sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’”¹⁴

There in that one verse you have the Father and you have the Son and you have the Holy Spirit. And there is the doctrine of the holy trinity that we believe in.

And then you see the transformation of it, this beautiful transaction that makes for transformation.

He says, “Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”¹⁵ And so we find that in this vast orphanage of the world, God sent forth his Son to adopt those who were dead in their trespasses and sins.

This is the theme of the whole Bible. Perhaps you could say that the adoption of sons is the theme of the whole Bible. You could say that the rescue of a bride is the theme of the whole Bible. You could say that the building of the house of God is the theme of the whole Bible.

But what you find is that this theme comes out right at the very beginning of Scripture, at the fall. At the fall all of mankind were made orphans. They were made fatherless. And the war against mankind, the war of the devil, the war against seed of the woman, the bruising of the head and this war that would ensue, from then until now was prophesied in Genesis.

And this was the beginning of the great orphanage that God was operating. And in that orphanage he would send his prophets. He would send his Word in order to rescue sons and bring many sons to glory. He caused man to fall. He caused them to become orphans so that he would come and he would save them.

And then they rose up and they built a tower and they said, “Let us make a name for ourselves.”¹⁶

They didn’t want the name of their Father in heaven. They wanted to make their own name and they built a tower and God scattered them across the earth and made many nations. Yet God is kind. He sends his prophets throughout history. He sends his law. He

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Galatians 4:7.

¹⁶ Genesis 11:4.

sends Abraham to help sinners understand that there is salvation by faith alone. And that is the same salvation that is being spoken of in this adoption that is so wonderfully explained.

“God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.”¹⁷

And in that one statement, “born under the law” is all of our salvation. He was the only one who kept the law. He was born under the law and he perfectly kept the law.

We have been studying Deuteronomy. Jesus Christ kept every law in Deuteronomy. He kept every command from Genesis to Revelation. He was born under the law and he was the only one who kept it. And he kept it for his adopted sons. He kept himself holy under the will of his Father so that he could adopt sons.

Notice the role of holiness in adoption, how God would be so kind to send a holy Son, one who never would break one single commandment all of his life long so that he would be able to adopt.

Holiness and adoption are so inextricably connected to this.

And then there is this very sobering warning in verses 8 through 11 where we find the apostle Paul says, “I am afraid for you because you think that your law keeping can make you acceptable before God. I am afraid for you.”

Now there are some very amazing things in here that I did not know until this week. Let’s look at verses eight through 11. He is speaking of the danger of becoming a slave, a slave to the law rather than one who loves it.

So let’s read it.

“But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods.”¹⁸

Stop right there. Remember who Paul is speaking to. He is speaking to the churches in the Galatian region. These were not Jews. Jews had come in and said, “Keep the law or die. Everybody needs to get circumcised around here in order to be saved.”

But these were not Jews. These were Greeks. These were pagans. These were people who had come out of the great mystery religions of the world, the satanic religions of the world. And Paul was saying, “You served those by which by nature are not gods. You did not know God.” He is talking about their paganism.

And then he says, “But now after you have known God or rather are known by God...”

¹⁷ Galatians 4:4.

¹⁸ Galatians 4:8.

So he gives two truths here that you know God and you are known by God. What a blessed thing it is to be known by God. He knows you. God knows everything about you. He peers into your heart. He knows of all of your problems you are carrying with you right now. He knows all of your fears. You are known by God.

Again, we come to the love of a Father.

“But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?”¹⁹

The apostle Paul is saying something very interesting here. He is saying that there are two ways that you can turn to the beggarly elements. You can do it through Judaism if you want. But you did it when you were pagan, too. When you were sacrifices to the pagan gods, when you were trying to shine yourself up and make yourself look as cool as you possibly could, you were turning to the beggarly elements. The beggarly elements, serving them, trying to be acceptable before God. You can do that as a pagan just as well as you can do it as a Jew. It is the same thing.

It is very startling that Paul puts paganism and Judaism in the same place. Do you see that? He puts them in the same bucket.

Now, of course, Paul does not think they really are equal. We know that from other places. But he does say that there is not much difference in the both of them when you are trying to win your salvation by the works of the law or trying to win favor with God and man or your own gods as a pagan.

And so Paul is talking to these Gentiles and he is saying that these beggarly elements are found in paganism. And this is how Paul views the formalistic religions. This is how Paul views externalism in Christianity and in Judaism. He is saying that if you are a Pharisee like this and you believe, you are a pagan. Paganism and Pharisaism come out of the same thing. They come out of the same whole. You know, all religions that are not based on justification by faith alone are pagan, including the great pagan religions. And so Paul is showing us what the tendency of man always is. And that is it always tries to be made acceptable by its outward appearance. And they always want to find something, some action, fixing some character flaw, doing some duty, having some accomplishment to make themselves feel good about themselves. It is the old bondage of paganism or Judaism. It is the same thing.

So the beggarly elements are everywhere. They are in paganism and they are in law keeping.

I would like to bring a number of applications to you on this text. We have just walked through many of the wonderful doctrines of the Christian faith—the doctrine of adoption, justification by faith, the doctrine of the trinity, many, many things like this. I just

¹⁹ Galatians 4:9.

wanted to tell you a few things that I am so grateful for in this passage by way of application.

I am so grateful that law keeping never can make me a son. You know, law keeping may prove that you are a son, but it can never make you a son. And there really are only two ways of it. You are either a slave or a son. But I am so thankful to be able to have a message that in this vast orphanage of the world there is a way that one can become a son. And I am so thankful that God would make me a son in the midst of all of my sins, all of my shortcomings, in every area of my life. I have shortcomings as a husband. I have shortcomings as a father. I have shortcomings as a worker. I have shortcomings as a friend, as a son, as an uncle. I fall short in every way in every place in my life and I am so thankful that God has made me a son in spite of my sinfulness.

Secondly, I am so grateful, I am so thankful for this person who has been crying out in my heart since I was in my teen years. He has been calling out, “Abba, Father.” I am so grateful that he has helped me, that he has come and taught me through this person in my heart that he sent. How could this person live in such a vile heart? I don’t know. That, again, is a miracle. That he would send the Son of God, the perfect sacrifice, the one who kept all the law is living in me. He is in me. This person lives. He kept the whole law. He walks with me wherever I go. He speaks to me wherever I am. He is with me. He is a person. I can quench. I can quench him so tragically. But he is in me. I am so thankful for that.

You know, he has walked with me, inside of me in the midst of all of my distractions, worldliness. He has still stayed in me. It is absolutely incomprehensible that he would do this, but this is what he is saying here that he has done for you and I.

And then I am faced with something that should define everything in my life. I am faced—and this is the third application—I am faced with a fact that changes everything in my worldview, in my daily life. I live in a world of billions of orphans. I live in an orphanage. And how do you conduct yourself in the great orphanage that is planet earth, the fallen planet? The whole world lies in the power of the evil one. You are in an evil orphanage now. That is where you live and God has placed you there. And what will you do in this orphanage? You will do what cried out in Peter when he was in those orphanages in Haiti. He wanted to take every one of them home. He wanted to find the biggest vehicle and the biggest airplane, thousands of them and take them all home. That is what he wanted. But we live in an orphanage and we walk around this orphanage and we care nothing for the people who are here in this orphanage. They are dirty. They are diseased. They have nothing. And we walk in this orphanage as though just everyone has a father. And they don’t.

How could we do that? How could we live in such a gigantic orphanage and never say anything to the orphans who have no father? How could we? How could I?

Oh, God, help us. Help me, oh Lord. Help us as a church, oh Lord. Fall upon us and let this not be true of us as we live in this orphanage.

And then, number four, fourth application is that, yes, we are sons and God disciplines his sons. God does discipline his sons.

Romans chapter eight verses 15 through 17 says that we have received the Spirit and it is the Spirit of adoption as sons and we cry out, “Abba, Father,” and “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.”²⁰

And then Paul says right away, right there. Right after he says you are joint heirs with Christ he says, “If indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”²¹

So God disciplines his sons. They are suffering. Sons who live in the great orphanage are also suffering as well. And we are often suffering.

You know, God only disciplines his sons. He proves that he is a father by disciplining them. Some of you are under tremendous, perhaps exasperating suffering. But God has brought you there because you are a son. And you can despise your suffering or you can cry out to God and thank him for it as the apostle said, “If we suffer with him, we will be glorified together.”

The way that a person suffers tells so much about their maturity, about their understanding of God and his kingdom, how well they know God. And if you are suffering today, please pass the test of your suffering. Pass the test. Let God be true and let the devil who is trying to destroy you be proved a liar because he is using this suffering to bring you to glory that you might be glorified with him.

And that includes every single kind of suffering that can be made. There is no suffering that is not collected under this category of the discipline of sons. And here God disciplines his sons.

You know, I was thinking about the apostle Paul who knew that he was a son and he was whipped with 39 lashes five different times. He was beaten with rods three different times. He was pummeled with stones one time. He was shipwrecked three times. He was adrift at sea one night and one day. He was on frequent journeys. He said he had dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from his own people, danger from the Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger in the sea, danger from false prophets, toil and hardship, many sleepless nights. He was often hungry and thirsty. He was cold and exposed.

And for all of that, in 2 Corinthians chapter four he says, “For this light, momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparisons as we look not to the things that are seen, but the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

²⁰ Romans 8:16-17.

²¹ Romans 8:17.

So it is true that God disciplines his sons. Let us be faithful sons in the midst of our trials and tribulations.

Some of us have become exasperated at very small things this week because we have lost a sense of God's hand upon his Son. We have forgotten our sonship.

And then, finally, the final application is this. The apostle Paul is reminding us of something and I have been grateful to be reminded of it myself and that is that God made me an heir. He made me an heir.

It doesn't really matter how much money you have in this world because it can come and go so quickly, but if you are an heir, now you have got something. Now you have something eternal in the heavens that will never pass away, something that is trustable.

As our Father and we, his heirs, he places his name on our foreheads as we learn in Revelation 14:2. He places a robe on us as he tells us in Revelation 7:9. He defeats the powers and principalities and he breaks the keys of hell and death as he tells us in Revelation 1:18.

As David says, "O LORD, you are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot."²²

In Psalm 16:6 he says, "The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; Yes, I have a good inheritance."²³

The lines falling to you in pleasant places are the lines that are strung from heaven.

Psalm 47:4 says, "He will choose our inheritance for us, The excellence of Jacob whom He loves."²⁴

And Romans 8:17. "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."²⁵

And so I can say along with the apostle Paul: If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise and you have this sweetness, this help in which there is a person inside of you if you have repented of your sins. And he teaches you and he helps you and he cries out within you, "Abba, Father."

When we studied this text on Tuesday morning Charles Churchill read to us Ezekiel 16:3-12 and the moment he read it I determined to conclude this instruction with the reading of

²² Psalm 16:5.

²³ Psalm 16:6.

²⁴ Psalm 47:4.

²⁵ Romans 8:17.

this text. And it is so beautiful and it really in such beautiful language sums up everything that we have just read.

Please turn to Ezekiel chapter 16 and we will read from verse 3 to verse 12, Ezekiel 16. Let your eyes fall on these words. They are so wonderful.

He begins with the unregenerate, fatherless in the orphanage of the world.

"...and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: "Your birth and your nativity are from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite."'"²⁶

By the way, that is not good news. That is bad news.

As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse you; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born.

And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' Yes, I said to you in your blood, 'Live!' I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine," says the Lord GOD. Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty.²⁷

A picture of a slave becoming an heir, enriched by a person living in his heart to bless him. Would you pray with me?

Oh Lord, we thank you for this amazing passage. Help us to learn it. Help us to understand it in all of its depth. I pray that you would help us, we who live in this great

²⁶ Ezekiel 16:3.

²⁷ Ezekiel 16:4-13.

orphanage of the world, to live as sons for the adoption of new sons and bringing many sons to glory. Amen.