

Series: *Christ's Preeminence Demonstrated*

Title: "Sons Who Can Cry Out: The Divine Conversation on Our Behalf" (Galatians 4:4-6, Romans 8:14-17)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 3/2/19

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*This document contains the complete transcript of a message
that was presented in two broadcasts.*

The passage I would like to call your attention this evening is found in Galatians chapter 4, beginning at verse 4. Galatians chapter 4 beginning at verse 4. The Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote these words to the Galatian believers, and to us:

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!" (Galatians 4:4-6)

Let's look to the Lord once again in prayer...

The passage that we have before us this evening, and the passage that we read a few moments ago in First John chapter 2, both tell us about a very vital aspect of our salvation, and that is our adoption in Christ as the sons of God.

The Context: Freedom From Bondage

The Apostle Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote these words in the context of a discussion of the Christian's freedom in Christ. Those who were once in

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bondage to the law and under the curse of the law have now been freed from that bondage. We have been delivered into a glorious liberty. And that liberty is ours because we are now the adopted sons of God.

The Apostle Paul is writing to Christians who were being tempted by false teachers to put themselves back under the law once again. They were being told by these false teachers to depend on their own works for salvation. And so Paul throughout the book of Galatians is saying in so many different ways, and demonstrating by so many different proofs, that this is the worst possible thing that anyone who names the name of Christ can possibly do.

And so in the first chapter of Galatians he makes the strongest statement that we have in all of Scripture concerning this vital matter. I'm sure you are familiar with it. He says that if anyone comes to you and preaches any other gospel other than the Gospel of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from the works of the law, let the one who comes to you and preaches any other thing be accursed. Literally, let the one who comes to you and preaches another gospel, a false gospel – let that person be condemned to hell.

Why? Because what that person says is a lie. You have been utterly and completely freed from the bondage and the curse of the law if you are truly believing in Christ alone for your salvation.

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And one of the ways in which the Apostle Paul demonstrates and declares this great fact is by reminding the us here in chapter 4 that we have been adopted as sons by the great God of the universe. We who were in bondage to the law have now been freed from the curse of the law by the grace of God in Christ.

The doctrine of adoption is greatly neglected in what I would call the post-evangelical church today. It is even greatly neglected in many Reformed churches today. I'm grateful to be able to say that it is not a neglected doctrine in this local church.

We could look at so many things about the doctrine of adoption. And I'm sure that those things would be familiar to you, so I don't want to focus too much of our time on them. But I do want to remind you of some key aspects of this great doctrine of adoption, in order to set the stage for us to look more closely at one particularly glorious aspect of it.

Adopted As Sons

First of all, it is vital for us to understand that Scripture tells us that we have been adopted as sons. The picture that the Apostle Paul places before us in his epistles – in Romans, in Ephesians, as well as here in Galatians – the picture that he places before us is a picture that is based upon the Roman law of adoption, which is the mode and manner of adoption that would have been familiar to his first century readers there in the Roman Empire.

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The Roman law of adoption was different for an adopted son than it was for an adopted daughter. The rights and the position that were granted to an adopted daughter under Roman law were not the same, not nearly as extensive, as the rights and privileges that were granted to an adopted son. An adopted daughter under Roman law had only partial rights and privileges. But an adopted son under Roman law had the fullest possible rights and privileges.

To be adopted as a son under Roman law meant that you had the right to the name and the citizenship of the person who adopted you. You have the right to inherit your adopted Father's property. The adopted son had the same rights and privileges and position as a naturally born son in every respect. These were rights that were not granted to an adopted daughter.

The Roman law of adoption also granted the one who adopted that son the full rights and responsibilities of a natural father, full authority over the adopted son, and full responsibility for the care of the adopted son.

That is the picture that we have before us. Your adoption, Paul is saying, is a full adoption, with full rights and full privileges. Each and every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, man or woman, boy or girl, everyone who is regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, has received "the adoption of sons." Full rights and privileges in the kingdom of God. No second-class citizens.

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We May Cry Out to God

The keynote of the doctrine of adoption is that it gives the believer, here and now, the right and the privilege to cry out to God. No one else has that right in that privilege except the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the adopted sons of God.

It is Christ who has opened the way for us to approach the God who was once our condemning judge as the God who is now, because of Christ, our loving Father. And so we have, in Christ, and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the right and the privilege to cry out to God.

The Nature of the Cry

Now as we consider this great truth, I want to do so by asking some questions. First of all, what is the nature of the cry of the adopted sons of God?

The Greek word that is translated "crying out" in verse 6 is the word *krazo*, which is the word from which we derive our English word, "to cry". And in the Greek of the New Testament, this was a word that carried with it the idea of deep emotion.

It is a strong word in the original. In other uses in the Greek of New Testament times, this word was used to represent the sound of a harsh scream, an exclamation of fear, or an exclamation of pain.

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The same word is used in Matthew chapter 15 when a woman of Canaan came to Jesus and cried out to Him, pleading with Him to have mercy upon her and to deliver her daughter who was possessed by a demon.

In Mark chapter 10 we find blind Bartimaeus crying out, when he heard that Jesus was passing by, and saying, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." And we're told that many in the crowd told him to be quiet, but that he cried out even more, "Son of David, have mercy on me." That was his cry. And Jesus did have mercy on him and healed him, and saved him.

And so the Apostle Paul is telling us here in Galatians chapter 4 that because we are the adopted sons of God, we have the same privilege of crying out to God. Crying out for mercy. Crying out for help in time of need.

Crying out not only for our own needs personally, but crying out for the needs of our families, crying out for the needs of our church, crying out for the needs of our fellow believers, crying out over the sin of our nation, and crying out, yes, over the sins of the visible church. And, also crying out to God in praise and in love.

So this is the nature of the believer's cry. We have this privilege of crying out to God in every circumstance, in every need, and also crying out to express our love and our gratitude for our great God and Savior.

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Who Does the Crying

Secondly, it is important for us to understand who does the crying out. Notice again verse six:

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

Now if you will keep your place in Galatians I would like for you to turn with me for a moment to the book of Romans. Romans chapter 15, at verse 8. Now here in Romans we have what appears to be the opposite of what we see in Galatians. Romans 8:15 says this:

For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

Now we need not think that there is a contradiction or a paradox here. That is not the case at all. There are no contradictions or logical paradoxes in Scripture. So what is the explanation? We have it in the next verse in Romans 8. The next verse, Romans 8:16, says this:

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God...

And we have it further explained for us in verses 22 and 23 where we are told this:

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For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption [that is, the consummation of our adoption], the redemption of our body.

Here is the explanation: We cry out to God because we are still living in these sinful decaying bodies. We cry out to God because we are still living in this sinful decaying world. This world under the curse is not an easy place to live in, especially for the believer, especially for the adopted sons of God. We are no longer at home here. Our citizenship is in Heaven. And then we are told this in chapter Romans chapter 8 verse 26:

Likewise the [Holy] Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And the statement that we have here in Galatians chapter 4 is expressing the same thought. "God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, 'Abba, Father!'" Romans 8 – "You received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'"

Here's the picture: When we cry out to God, when we cry out for His mercy, when we cry out in fear, when we cry out in need, when we cry out in desperation, and

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when we cry out in the deepest praise – in all these times of crying out, God the Holy Spirit is uttering the cry with us. God the Holy Spirit is enabling and energizing that crying out. We cry out to God under the interceding power and authority of God the Holy Spirit.

And what does the Apostle Paul tell us in Romans 8? After he has told us that the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, in Romans 8:27 he then tells us this:

He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

This is speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is speaking of the dual intercession of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit on behalf of the believer in Christ. God the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with God the Son. The Spirit articulates the things that we cannot articulate. The Spirit cries out for us. And the Spirit enables us to articulate our own crying out. And Paul says that Jesus, the One who searches the hearts, the One who knows what the mind of the Spirit is, therefore makes intercession for the saints with the Father according to the will of God.

And it is because all of this is true that we come to that glorious statement of the next verse, Romans 8:28, that

We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

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FIRST BROADCAST ENDS HERE

It is because of all this that we are told a few verses onward in Romans 8,

If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? [that great inheritance of the adopted sons of God]

And then a few verses further on in Romans 8, we are told that nothing in the entire created order, and nothing in the entire spiritual realm, can separate us from the love of God in Christ. Not tribulation, not distress, not persecution, not famine, not nakedness, not peril, not the sword.

Not angels, not principalities or powers, not anything present, not anything to come, not height, not depth, not any other created thing – nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What We May Cry Out

And let us not only take note of the fact that we can cry out, and that we cry out together with the Spirit living within us, but let us take note of what it is that we may cry out: "Abba, Father!" "Abba, Father!" What does this mean?

Well the word "Abba" was one of the first words that would be spoken by a Hebrew infant. It is the equivalent of terms such as "papa" or "daddy" in the English

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language. It was a term in the Hebrew language that indicated unquestioning trust in the love and the care of a parent.

And the Apostle Paul, both here in Galatians and also in Romans, couples the word "Abba" with the word "Father" to explain two aspects of the believer's relationship with God the Father as an adopted son.

The word "Abba" indicates that unquestioning trust of a child. And the word "Father" indicates an intelligent understanding of the relationship, an intelligent understanding of the nature of God the Father and of our position of privilege as the adopted sons of the Father in Christ. The picture that we have in these two words coupled together, "Abba, Father!" is that of a trusting child climbing up into the lap of a loving Father to tell Him exactly what is on your heart.

Dear friend, this is your enormous privilege if you are a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ. This is your enormous privilege as the adopted son of God. You can speak to God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Holy Spirit on the most intimate and personal terms.

Our Approachable Father

The great actor Orson Welles was once asked if he ever prayed. Orson Welles replied that he did not pray, because, he said, "I don't want to bore God." But dear friend, those were the words of an unbeliever. Those were the words of someone who

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knew nothing of the adoption of the sons of God in Christ. "I don't want to bore God."

But that must never be the attitude of the child of God. That must never be how we think of the tremendous privilege of prayer. That must never be how we think of our heavenly Father.

You are to come before your loving Father as a trusting child. You cannot possibly "bore" your heavenly Father with anything that you would have to say, with any cry of your heart. It is the privilege of the adopted sons of God to cry out to God. You can tell Him all that is on your heart. You can tell Him everything.

Examples In The Psalms

The book of Psalms is filled with examples of the exercise of this great privilege. The Psalms demonstrate to us that we can indeed, we may indeed, tell our Heavenly Father all that is on our hearts, as a trusting child comes to an earthly father to tell him everything.

We may tell our Heavenly Father the things that give us joy, the things that worry us, the things that hurt us, the things for which we are thankful, the things we need, our deepest thoughts, our deepest desires, the sins we wrestle with. We can bring all of these things to our loving Father, and know without a doubt on the authority of His Word that He will hear us with a heart of love and kindness.

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Let me call your attention to just one of the many examples of this kind of outcry to a loving Father that we find on so many occasions in the Psalms. David prayed these words in Psalm 55, when he was overcome by fear. Psalm 55, beginning at verse one:

Give ear to my prayer, O God, and do not hide Yourself from my supplication. Attend to me, and hear me; I am restless in my complaint, and moan noisily, because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked;

For they bring down trouble upon me, and in wrath they hate me. My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me. So I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest." ...

And then notice verse 16:

As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me. Evening and evening and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice. (Psalm 55:1-6, 16-17)

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We May Come Boldly

Do you have times like this? Do you cry out to God like this? If you don't, you are missing out on your greatest privilege as the adopted son of God. In Hebrews chapter 4 verse 16 the writer encourages us with these words:

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

We could say much about that passage also, but I want to focus our attention on just one thought: "Let us therefore come boldly." "Boldly." Now the word that's used here does not mean let us come brashly, or presumptuously, or without proper respect or reverence. But it does tell us about two aspects of our coming – first, how we may speak to our Lord; and second, the attitude with which we may come before Him.

The word "boldly" in the original language encompasses several things. It says that you may have freedom in speaking as you approach the Lord. It says that, within the bounds of reverence, you may be unreserved in your speech. You may, and indeed you should, speak to your God openly, frankly, without concealment.

The word "boldly" also speaks of our attitude in coming to the throne of grace. It tells us that you may come with free and fearless confidence; with cheerful courage; with assurance that as the adopted son of God you have the right to come, and God wants you to come.

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That is certainly the kind of understanding of the heart of God that we find in the words of David in the Psalms.

The Great Conversation

And in Ephesians chapter 6 the adopted sons of God are told to pray always with all prayer and supplication "in the Spirit" – God the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, the One who dwells within us, the One who witnesses with our spirits that we are indeed the adopted sons of God.

And that is because, as we come to a loving Father, as we cry out, "Abba, Father," the Holy Spirit is coming with us. And as we have seen in Romans chapter 8, the indwelling Spirit of God, the Third Person of the Trinity, is making intercession for us through our Savior, the Second Person of the Trinity, to the Father, the First Person of the Trinity.

Dear friend, get hold of this great fact: All three Persons of the great Godhead are involved in your exercise of the great privilege of prayer. You can cry out to God. And even the things that you cannot articulate, even the things that you in your flesh cannot properly present as a petition before your loving Father, even those things are clearly articulated on the most intimate possible terms before your Heavenly Father. The persons of the Godhead are literally speaking with one another on your behalf as you pray. What a tremendous fact. What a tremendous privilege.

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We don't know what the Lord has in store for us in the days ahead. We never know what we will face. But we know we are God's adopted sons. We know that He wants us to cry out to Him in every need.

Dear friend, if you are an adopted son of God, if you are trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your salvation, you can pray to your Heavenly Father like this. At any time, in any place, in any situation, about anything and everything.

Remember that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit in this present world. "Set your mind on things above," dear friend, "where Christ is" – your great Intercessor with your loving Father – "sitting at the right hand of God."

"Set your mind on things above, and not on things on earth. For you died" – you are dead to this world, but alive in Christ – "and your life is hidden with Christ in God [the Father]" – the ultimate place of safety, both now and for eternity. Cry out to your loving Father, as His adopted son. Let us pray.

Benediction

Now to Him who is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)

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