

Thought for Sunday 3rd January 2021

Pastor Gordon Hamilton

Communion: Please have a piece of bread or cracker and a drink ready. We will share together later in the service.

Read Galatians 3:26-4:7

We have just celebrated the fact that our Lord and Saviour, God's one and only Son, Jesus Christ, was born 2,000 years ago in Bethlehem. My N.I.V. bible heads up this passage; '*Sons of God.*' We are all 'sons of God' it tells us, and yes we are, but we are adopted sons of God, saved through grace. As verse 26 puts it; '*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*' That is the important thing, we become sons of God; '*through faith in Christ Jesus.*' And Paul continues to say, you don't have to be a Jew to be an adopted son of God, verse 28; '*There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*' It is totally through faith in Jesus, which just confirms Jesus' own words in John 3:16; '*whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*' The promise is there and Paul confirms the reality, '*We are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.*' A few weeks ago we looked at the genealogy of Jesus and traced his family back through Matthew (1:1-2) and Luke (3:34) to Abraham, and Paul here affirms that we belong in that same line, verse 29; '*If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*' The promise is signed in Jesus' own blood, shed for us on the cross at Calvary. As I said, we traced Jesus' family through Abraham back to Adam, and I talked of how I had been able to trace my family back to the 18th century. But there is one aspect of my tree where I cannot go back very far and that is my link into the family of God. I have said before about my first Sunday School teacher, Eleanor Jeffcote, who prayed for me every day for 50 years. She must have had some input into my being a believer. Then there are my Boys Brigade officers; Alf Townsend and Ben Searle, plus the youth club leaders at the Baptist Church I attended, who encouraged me to be baptised. My eldest sister, June, who when I was away in the merchant navy kept sending me 'Daily Bread' bible notes. Then a Certain Welsh pastor, Bill Miles, who kept nudging me, plus a lady called Grace Dalglish, who prayed for me to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Then Mike Nicholls, a tutor at Spurgeon's College whose sermon at Crawley Baptist Church in the 80's encouraged me to seek which way I should go in the future, whether it was into ministry. A lot of people have had an input into my Christian life, I am sure I have missed some very important people out, Wyn Samson and Phyl Dean who prayed for me over many years, I could go on. They were all involved in my Christian genealogy, but what their genealogies are, I don't know, but I thank God for every single one of them because without them I wouldn't be doing what I am doing now. So we must spend time thanking God for everyone who has encouraged each of us in our walk with Jesus, we are also called to give someone a reason to thank God for what we are doing for others. As we read the early verses of chapter 4, we see the mention of guardians and trustees, and maybe that is what those various people I have mentioned were to me, they were my guardians, my trustees, endeavouring to keep me on the straight and narrow. What I do thank God for is that I am able, freely, to say; '*Abba, Father.*' I am not a slave, I am a son, adopted into God's family, why? Because of the truth of verses 4 and 5; '*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*' Being a Christian is about walking with God, it is about having a personal relationship with Jesus, and it is ongoing. Being a Christian is not about saying, I believe, and then going off and doing things your way, it is about being in love with Jesus, and if that is real then it has to manifest itself in what we do and what we say. Two weeks ago we ended with Mary's song, which asked the question of Mary, *did you*

know your baby boy will one day walk on water? Did you know he will save our sons and daughters? Did you know he has come to make you new and this child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you? I believe Mary knew, but it is also a requirement from those of us who follow him, for those who call themselves Christians, as it says in verse 7; 'you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.' So our reading begins and ends with the promise that we are heirs, heirs of God's grace, so we can be called; 'Sons or daughters of God.' What a great way to start 2021. We pray that this year we will see the end of the restrictions that have been so difficult for so many people. My personal prayer is that many, even in these difficult times, will recognise Jesus as their own personal Lord and Saviour, and recognise they are a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Paul not only talks of us as being adopted into God's family, to be like real children and heirs, Paul also talks of those who are slaves, and as much as we in the UK don't think of slavery going on, it is and it does go on. There are slaves even in the UK here in the 21st century, and as we read earlier in verse 7; '*you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.*' Let's read that again; '*you are no longer a slave, but God's child;*' it may seem difficult to comprehend, but you are an heir of God's grace, so when I say 'brothers and sisters, no matter who you are, the colour of your skin, or how much money you have, we are brothers and sisters together. The Lord bless you all. Amen.

As we now share in the Lord's supper, let's pray: Father we thank you for being with us today and that you are faithful to your promises. Forgive us for all those things we have said and done, in thought and deed and bless us we eat this bread, a symbol of your body, amen. - As we take and drink the cup of the new covenant, we proclaim the Lord's death, until He comes again. Amen. We say the Lord's prayer; '*Our Father..... Amen*'

When I remember what He did for me,
I'll praise Him with all my heart. (repeat)

*Chorus: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes,
I'll praise Him with all my heart. (repeat)*

When I remember that He died for me,
I'll praise Him with all my heart. (repeat)

*Chorus: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes,
I'll praise Him with all my heart. (repeat)*

When I remember that He rose again,
I'll praise Him with all my heart. (repeat)

*Chorus: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes,
I'll praise Him with all my heart. (repeat)*

When I remember that He's coming again,
I'll praise Him with all my heart. (repeat)

*Chorus: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes,
I'll praise Him with all my heart. (repeat)*