

Faith like a Child

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[0 : 0 0] in Galatians is that as we realize that friendship with God is being family, then we are moved from what is that old present evil age that he described at the start of the letter of trying to do stuff to be right with God. And that is so enslaving because you can never do enough to be right with God. And you always feel like you're working hard and you are being moved into a new age where you are a new creation as someone who is in God's family and you're totally accepted.

And the picture that Paul paints for us as one of God's people is of a family. It's of a multicultural, multi-ethnic family. So here's a picture of a family. I've got a friend, Steve.

This isn't their family, so I don't want to put their family up. But it's a glorious family, isn't it? You've got different sexes in there. You've got guys and you've got girls. And they're laughing.

They're filled with joy. They've had good times at some point. They've shared hard times. They've shared good times. Sometimes they may have got into trouble and things have gone wrong and they've had to be helped out by the other members of the family. And that's been okay. And there are different types of people in there. You've got rich people in the family, poor people. Some have got good jobs. Some have got less good jobs. Some are, you've got different cultures, different colors. Some white folk, some African folk. It doesn't matter. You've got all sorts of people in the family. And all that they've done to be in the family is simply to believe in Jesus, to be in Jesus, and to get God's spirit. And the way in is that word being in Christ. And so if we just turn back to chapter two in Galatians, verse 20, we'll look at those verses again where Paul writes, verse 20, I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. And the key word there is that in Christ word. Christ lives in me, in the Son of God. And being in

Christ, Paul simply means that when we believe in Jesus, he comes and lives within you by his Holy Spirit. And you are united to God's family. You're one of God's family because you all have the same Spirit of God living within you. And so just look down back in Galatians 3 at verses 26 to 29 and just count how many times in that little section he says in Christ or with Christ or belong to Christ or through Christ in that section. And so tonight what we're going to do is very briefly, we're going to look at briefly at four things that Paul says is true of us if we are in Christ, if we're believing and trusting in Jesus, and when we are in God's family. And in verse 26, we see the first thing there. And if you've got your white sheet, just follow along there. And it's a bit obvious, but being in God's family means in Christ, we are sons of God, verse 26. Very briefly there, we are God's children. We aren't the parents in God's family. So in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith. And so here's a quote by Sinclair Ferguson. It's at the top of your sheet there, Scottish author. He says, the notion that we, the idea that we are children of God, his own sons and daughters, is the mainspring of the Christian living. Our sonship to God is the apex.

[3 : 5 2] It's the highest point of creation and the goal, the end of redemption, of being saved. And what he is saying is that becoming a child of God by faith is the reason that you have been created.

It's at the heart of becoming right with God. You see, as adults, we think about everything in transactional terms. Before we do anything, we do a cost-benefit analysis. Everything is a transaction.

And we think that God works like that too. I put my coin in, I get my goodie out. And that's what the Galatians were thinking. They had a transactional view of God. But Paul says, no, in Christ, by faith, you are a child of God. Here's your father. And that makes all the difference.

I realize that some of us have tricky experiences with our fathers, but hopefully you might be able to remember positive time. So maybe you've, a time when you've been at your lowest end, maybe you've done your Duke of Edinburgh or you've gone hiking or something. And you've got about, or you've done the West Highland Way and you've got about 60 miles down the road and you're sopping wet through and you've got blisters and you've really had enough. And so what do you do? You ring your dad to come pick you up. Well, maybe you're kind of two thirds of the way through the month and you've run out of money and you ring your dad and say, hey dad, I love you. Can you send money or something like that?

That would be brilliant. And they do it. Why do they do it? Simply because they love you. Because they are your father. Or maybe you've gone through a heartache and you've really had to share something with your parents, with your father. And you've told them all your griefs and all your sorrows and how it's been really hard and how life is so unfair. And what do they say? They say the world's most annoying thing. It's okay. I still love you. They'll accept you no matter what.

[5 : 56] Because being a child of God means being accepted and loved by God no matter what. Simply because you are his child. You don't have to do anything whatsoever. You'll never be more his child through anything you do. And you'll never be less his child through anything you do. So the spiritual journey that we see the Galatians doing. Maybe has anyone seen Paddington 2 here? It's my favorite movie in the world. My favorite character in the movie is Knuckles McGee. Anybody know Knuckles McGee?

Knuckles McGee is the bad guy who Paddington befriends in prison. And Knuckles McGee has a transactional view of the world. Knuckles McGee doesn't do anything, nothing for no one for nothing.

Everything has got to cost. And so what he ends up doing is he ends up using Paddington to escape out of jail for his own benefit. And what happens is the movie, he moves from that transactional view to a family view, to viewing life through Paddington's eyes of being. And so he saves Paddington simply because Paddington views life as family. And so the journey that we've got to see in Galatians, is that we mustn't have Knuckles McGee's view, that everything is cost-benefit, but that we must have Paddington's view of the Christian life, that it's all about family. And it's not just, and when he says children of God in the NIV there, it's perhaps more literally translated sons of God.

And the idea of their sonship is less about gender and biology, but more about status and relationship to the Father. Gender doesn't matter. It's a statement of receiving the Father's absolute favor.

And the second thing that we learn about God's family, and this is the reason that we are children of God, and how that becomes possible, is that we, in Christ, we are clothed in Christ. Verse 27.

[7 : 58] Just look down there at verse 27. For all of you were baptized into Christ, and have clothed yourselves with Christ. And in baptism, when we are baptized, we declare our faith and our trust and obedience in Christ, and our intention to keep on living for Him. And the picture is that when you're baptized, we get the pond out here, we get the pool out, and you stand to the one side, and you take off your old, dirty clothes, and you place them down there. And then you go into the water, and you come out of the water, and all the dirt that was on you is washed completely off. And when you step out of the baptism pool, you don't go back and put on your old, dirty clothes, but you receive new clothes, bright, shining new clothes that make you look absolutely brilliant and beautiful.

And the old clothes that you put aside, those are the things that you've been washed from. The record are the things that you've done in the past, whatever they may be. The things that you might be ashamed of as a Christian. And when you put on the new clothes, you put on Christ, the record of His perfect life, His perfect relationship with God, of living in perfect obedience to God.

His desires and His ambitions, the things that He wants in life. And we see His desires and ambitions in the type of Son that Jesus is shown to be in Galatians. So He is the Son who reveals Himself and God's plan to the ungodly. Chapter 1, verse 16, He revealed Himself to Paul. And then He is the Son who is sent by God and goes to a world who hates Him but needs Him. Chapter 4, verse 4. And He is the Son who loves us and gave Himself for us. Chapter 2, verse 20. And not that we could ever do those things like Jesus does them, but that we can look to Him as an example of the things that we should do, of pointing others to Jesus and of loving others as we have been loved by Jesus. The other thing that we see in baptism is that in the context of Galatia, where there's sharp division on cultural lines between

Jews and Gentiles, faith in Jesus unites culturally different people as children of God in Jesus. You see, the Galatians were saying that you need to be Jewish to be saved. And that was putting off non-Jews from coming to Christ and making non-Jews from coming to Christ and feel like second-class citizens in the church. But Paul says, no, you don't need that Jewish stuff to be saved. You are saved simply by hearing and believing the good news about Jesus. And the sign that you believe is that you have been baptized. And so look down at verse 27 again. For all of you were baptized, have clothed yourself with Christ. And for all of you there, you could read different individuals, but it's perhaps more accurately speaking of different groups of people, different cultures of people within the church. And so clothes are cultural distinctives. Maybe you know that.

Certain guys on campus or certain people wear certain types of clothes. So rugby players wear rugby clothes and rappers wear rap clothes. I don't know. I'm not brilliant at this. And so when you go to be baptized, you take off your cultural clothes, the things that you might find your identity in.

[11 : 51] So if you're a Scot, you take off your kilt. Or if you're African, you take off your colorful shirt. Or if you're a goth, you'll take off your black clothes. Or your vegan environmentally friendly jeans.

You put those to one side and you go into the waters. And you come out of the waters and you don't put on those old cultural clothes, but you put on Jesus culture clothes. You gain a new culture.

You put on holiness, wanting to please God more than anything else. You put on integrity, doing the right thing even if it hurts. You put on love, not simply for those who love you, but for your enemies. You put on courage, living for Jesus, taking costly stands for Jesus at class, at work with your friends, simply because you believe and trust in Jesus. And so in God's family, in Christ, we are clothed like Jesus. And the third thing we learn about being in God's family, and we've hinted at this a bit already, is that being in God's family, in Christ, we are one.

Verse 28. So just look down there at verse 28. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male or female, for you're all one in Christ. And so I wonder if you're someone here who's got siblings here this evening. And I wonder if you've ever had that argument over who is the favorite sibling amongst your siblings in the family. The oldest one always says it's the youngest. The youngest always says it's the oldest. The middle one always says it's everyone else but them. Or it might be the one who is the most common with the parents, or the one who's accomplished the most in life. That's the one who receives the parents and the father's favor. And I say that slightly tongue-in-cheek, but favorites by parents among siblings can cause a lot of grief and heartache, can be really hurtful. And the issue with the Galatians is that the Galatians were saying that God has got favorites. God loves the Jews, and therefore you should be like a Jew. You need to be like them to be saved. And they had forgotten everything that God had done among the Gentiles, that is non-Jewish people in Galatians. And it was causing a lot of heartache in their church.

But Paul here says, no, in God's family there are no favorites. All you have to do is to believe what you have heard. If you've got ears to hear and a heart to trust, then you are a Christian. No more is needed. You are in God's family. You are a beloved child. And so there are no favorites. There are no arbitrary distinctions. And the thing that unites you in God's family is not your outward features, but have you got God's Spirit within you? Are you trusting Jesus? Are you in Christ?

[15 : 05] So just look what he says in verse 28. There's no male or female. You don't get preferential treatment because you're a boy or a girl. I had a friend who thought that only boys could become Christians.

And so for many years, she didn't become a Christian. Later, she did become a Christian, but she had to unlearn that. Or no Jew or Gentile, no ethnic or cultural distinctions are to be made in God's family. No slave or freeman. No class distinctions are to be made. The question is, have you got God's Spirit? Are you in Christ? That's the threshold. And if you are in Christ, you are in God's family. No more in or no less in than anyone else. You're completely accepted and loved. And it's not that those categories, those differences are obliterate. They still exist, but within those categories, there's inequality. They aren't meant to be used for gain and for lording it over others. And it perhaps barely needs to be said, but it's probably helpful to say, it's not that we do the bare minimum in trying to treat one another equally in these categories, in honoring this principle that we are all one in Christ and have the whole same Spirit. But that we should do this more and more and more and more in whatever helpful ways we can. So it might be intentionally befriending someone who's very different from you, who is culturally or socially different to you. If they are in God's family and they've got God's Spirit, then they are one, the same as you. It might be speaking in a way that's sensitive to others, remembering that there are differences, but you're still equal and you should honor one another more and more. It might be working hard to maintain and build the unity across a church family, wherever you may be, across all groups within the church family, and not putting up, not forming cliques or building divisions, but seeking to be united as one church family. Remembering that God's Spirit is in each and every Christian. And so if you've been clothed in Christ and you're wearing the family jumper, if you have God's Spirit, then there is no other distinction to be made along gender, class, or culture. What matters is, are you in Christ? Are you in God's family? So in God's family, in Christ we are sons of God, we're God's children, we're loved by Him, we are clothed, we're dressed radiantly with Christ's clothes, we are one. And then finally, very quickly, in Christ we're Abraham's seed, verse 9. So just look at 29 there, verse 29. If you belong to Christ, then you're

Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. And what he is saying in this line, very briefly, is that the thing that God's people were looking forward to, the promise that he gave to the patriarch Abraham of being right with God, of being with Him forever, of enjoying Him, where there'd be no tears, no pain, no crying, of knowing God and of having full assurance, then if we believe and trust in Jesus, in Christ, in God's family, then we will inherit that thing, then we'll be found in that place. That promise will be ours, simply by believing and trusting in Jesus. Just note there, he says, if you belong to Christ, if we belong to Him, then it means that we should show that we belong, by living as if we do belong. That's our responsibility. But it also means that if we are His, then Christ, then Jesus will watch over us as a dearly loved sibling, as a dearly loved child of God. He will care for us. He'll look after us as one of the family. He will rescue us and bring us home. So a couple of years ago in South Africa, there was this advert, if you're South African, you'll know it. I can't remember what it was advertising, but it was this picture of these two desert elephants walking through the Namibian desert. It's the hottest desert in the world.

And these elephants go through it, and they survive. And the advert was, the song they was playing was, He's Not Heavy, He's My Brother. And it was of this bull elephant caring for a little carp through the desert. And it's a great picture of how Christ loves us and cares for us, of how He'll bring us through the hard times, bring us through the hardships, simply because we are in Him and in God's family. He'll care for us no matter what we go through in life, through the hard times, through the tough times, through the ups and downs, through exam anxiety, through job anxiety. All of those, Jesus will bring you through. He's big enough. You're in His family, and you're dearly loved.

Let me close in prayer for us. So, Father, we thank you that in Christ we aren't lacking in any way, that we have been fully and finally accepted in Jesus. Please help us to live as your children more and more each day. Help us to be concerned about unity more and more each day. Help us to encourage one another. Help us to build one another up. Help us to honor one another and care for one another more and more each day. In Jesus' name. Amen.