

Adopted as Sons

Galatians 4:1-7

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TRANSCRIPT:

Galatians 4:1-7 reads, "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."

Let us pray. Lord, we pray that You would send forth the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our understanding, to persuade us of the truth of Your gospel and of Your mercy in Christ, and to empower me as I preach Your word and to give Your people strength to listen, to apply themselves, and to be engaged with the truths of Scripture, so that we might hear, Lord God, not as it were my words, but rather the voice of the Son of God speaking through the preached word. And we ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

We considered last week Galatians 3:26-29, and we considered that the believers now have a new identity in Christ, that they are sons of God and have put on Christ, and therefore, as a result, they should live as one in Christ. They should be unified and united because of that identity. But now, Paul goes on to explain to us in Galatians 4:1-7 how it is that they have become sons of God. It is all good and well to say that you are sons of God, but in what sense are we sons of God? And Paul makes a point to explain that the sonship that we have received is that we have been adopted as sons.

And so, in this section that we'll be looking at this morning, he will compare the law and the promise, showing that the law is that which brings slavery and makes God's children under the old covenant just as if they were slaves. It produces bondage. Yet there is this promise which accords with

the maturity of the children, so that as the children go on and become mature sons, they enter into the inheritance, and they receive, as it were, the adoption of sons and the inheritance that belongs to that. And he's going to demonstrate that not just showing how it works individually in our own lives, but showing how this is part of God's redemptive purpose, that the old era that marked the children of Israel and the old covenant was marked by slavery, bondage, and a certain immaturity that now has matured in the redemptive purposes of God. And now, in the new covenant, we receive the adoption of sons, and we are entering into the fullness of that which God has given us through the Lord Jesus Christ. And the way he does this, his method of approach to explaining this truth, is that he uses illustration in verses 1 and 2, then he gives an interpretation of the illustration in verses 3 to 5, and then he makes application to us in verses 6 to 7.

So I want us to look at the illustration briefly as we begin and consider verses 1 and 2 together. "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." And here, Paul shows that the heir, who is in the household, as it were, of the father, and the slave, are very similar while the son is a child. And the word "child" is the word which comes from the word "not being able to speak." And so, it has a very distinct emphasis as to the immaturity of the child or the infancy of the child. Of course, he's not talking about a physical infant. He's talking about the nation of Israel and the covenant people of God through redemptive history, and he's likening them to that child who knows not how to speak, or in the sense of the fact that there was an immaturity there or not a full revelation of what God was going to do in His Son. And so, the heir as a child has similarities in that the heir and the slave are similar. But the child is lord of all, as the passage says in verse number one. It says, "as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master or lord over all."

It's quite interesting, isn't it? Here you have a child that is in the household that Paul is saying is no different from a slave. And although all the inheritance of his father belongs to him by title, it is not yet his by possession. And this is the point Paul's trying to make. Though he's in the house with the slave, and he is a child, and the title of the inheritance belongs to him, it is not yet his by possession. He hasn't entered into the experience of his inheritance and has not yet possessed it. And therefore, the heir is represented as no different from a slave.

Now, that is a hyperbole. Of course, the heir is different from a slave in some respects, as we'll look at in a moment. But for the sake of Paul's argument, he is trying to relate it to the law in regards to its bondage. That's why he says both are under tutors and governors, and both are not in pos-

session, as it were, of the father's goods. And this is the point that he's trying to show. He makes the exaggeration, but he's showing the point that a child, while he is yet an infant and a slave, doesn't differ at all from one another because they are both under the bondage of the mastery. And although the son, or the child, sorry, shall be lord of all and is lord of all by title, he is not by possession. And therefore, his experience is the same as that of a slave in regards to bondage.

And the marked difference between the slave and the child, as Paul is pointing out here, is the future of both. And this is what is said in verse number two: "But he is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father." You see, the child, if he comes to maturity, he will, at the time appointed by the father, receive the inheritance promised to him, and that which is his by title may become his by possession. But until then, he experiences the same as a slave, under mastery, under bondage, and under tutors and guardians.

And so, Paul, what do you mean by what you say here? Explain it. Well, he does. Verse number three, He gives us an explanation: "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." Notice the time element. This should shape our entire interpretation, be a controlling principle of interpretation of this passage. "Even so we, when we were children, when we were children, when we were in a state of immaturity, when we were not possessors of the promise that was not yet fully revealed to us, when we were in," he goes on to say, "bondage. Children but slaves. In immaturity but under the bondage. No different, as it were, from a slave. We were in bondage," he says, "to the elements of the world," which is another way of Paul's saying that we're under bondage to the fundamental principles that govern the world's relationship to God. I'm going to bring this out in chapter four as we look at it later on in the future. But the idea is that he's showing that both Jew and Gentile are under this sort of legalism. It's the fundamental principles. This is what the elements of the world refer to. And in context, he's referring to tutors and governors and bondage and imprisonment. And he's simply saying that when we were children and we were under the law, we were in bondage to legalism. We were in bondage to the law. And therefore, we were alienated from God and separated, as it were, from the promises, from the promise. We didn't enter into the covenants of the promise. And he's simply saying that we were kept on guard. We were in prison. We were under a tutor. We were under the law. Paul is simply showing here is that our condition, or the condition of the children of Israel, generally speaking, under that old covenant, was a position of bondage, was a position where there was, as it were, a possession

before them, the possession of the inheritance of the new covenant and the promise of the seed and of the son. But they, as a whole, did not enter into that possession and therefore were no different to slaves under bondage, under legalism. That is basically the testimony of the Old Testament.

And what Paul is then doing is applying it to us all, helping us understand that such was our condition. And such is our predicament when we are under the law. So despite the fact that the Galatians are this side of the cross, if they choose to live as though they are under the law, their experience will be no different to that which was experienced by the children of Israel under their bondage as slaves. Or no different to slaves, Paul says. Such was our condition, such was our predicament: an immaturity, a lack of knowledge, in bondage, not near, as it were, to the promises, to the possession of the promises, and under the hard taskmaster of legalism.

But Paul says, but despite the bondage which marked the old era, despite the bondage that marked the people under the law, a new day has dawned. A new era has dawned, and in redemptive history, there has been a shift. Look what he says in verse number four: "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son." He's painting a grim picture that marks the people of God under the old covenant, under the law, as a picture of slavery and bondage, where in one sense they had entitlement to the possession but never experienced, as a whole, entered into the possession. And he's saying that is no different for us who live under the law even now. And he's simply saying this is the product of living under the law and not living under grace and according to the grace of God.

And he's saying, but although that was their condition and although that was our condition, or is our condition without Christ, he says, "but in the fullness of the time had come, God." The slavery, the guilt, the guardianship of the law, the pressure of the ceremonialism and ritualism that constantly reminded the people of their distance from God and their sin and corruption as they slayed lamb after lamb in remembrance of transgression, seeking after the mercy of God, as the world, as it were, had ripened and matured in darkness overall, as they saw that the law could not redeem among the nation and the children of Israel. And as the nations had wallowed in their own paganism and in their own sin for thousands of years, "when the fullness of the time was come, God." But God. The hand of the Lord entered in. But God acted in response to the grimness and the darkness that marks the history of the world. He acted. He acted when the fullness of the time had come. When the time was ripe, when it was ready, when it was overflowing, He acted without delay. He acted without mistake. In fact, verse number two calls this the time appointed by the father, here interpreted as when the fullness of the time had come.

Amazing, isn't it? What may have been and seemed even to us as we read our Bibles is a very long period of time and saying, "Why didn't You come, Jesus, back then when that happened? And why didn't You come, Lord Jesus, back then?" What God is telling us here is that it was not yet the fullness of time. The time wasn't ripe. It wasn't yet ready. God had His finger on the pulse of history, working out His purposes of redemption, and He was not delaying one bit. God intervened and acted at the perfect time.

I don't know about you, but this is the testimony of the entire Scripture. But God. When darkness was upon the face of the deep and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, what happened? God said, "Let there be light." And there was light. When the children of Israel, under bondage in slavery to Egypt, the Bible says when God looked upon their affliction and their cry rose up to God, God remembered the covenant that He made with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God sent Moses to deliver the people from bondage that they might enter into the promise that God had made for them. But God acted in the darkness of their slavery as a picture of redemption.

We see this not only in the redemption of the children of Israel but right throughout the Scriptures. When you look at the book of Judges, what do you have? This cyclic motion of these of this story of people's corruption and bondage and slavery. The other nations come and possess them. And all of a sudden, but God rose up Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, to rescue the people and to deliver His people. This is the testimony of God and the way He works, not only in redemption, not only in creation, but the way that God works in the help even of His people. When Joseph was shut up in prison and he was seemed to be rejected by his family and from his brothers and now Potiphar and those people that were his only supposed hope, the Bible says to us, "but God." But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him mercy and gave him favor. He was there to help His people. As the Psalmist says, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all." And you can go right through Scripture and see that this is what's happened.

This is what happened in the incarnation as explained to us here. "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son." God entered in. God rose up His Son and sent His Son and brought His Son and sent His Son into the world to be born of a woman, born under the Lord, to redeem us. And isn't this exactly how it's going to be at the end of days? When the fullness of the time has come, the time appointed of the father, as the world is ripe in iniquity and the people of God cry out at the souls under the altar in the book of Revelation, "How long, O Lord, till You come and Your righteous judgments are made known?" But one day, the Bible says, but God, God the Son will come in the brightness and splendor of

His glory. And He will judge sin once and for all and eradicate sin from the universe and will set up His everlasting kingdom forever and ever. And the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. And He shall reign forever and ever.

The testimony of Scripture is the testimony of the eternal God acting in time and in space and affecting change in the world. And Paul says that very thing here. When we were children, we were in bondage. When it seemed like there was no hope, but God. God sent His Son. He acted. He executed His plan at the perfect time. He affected change. The change that marks our calendars from BC to AD. God sent forth His Son. He didn't send just a messenger or an angel or an emissary. God sent His Son. The eternal Son of God, one with the father from all eternity, who was there at the beginning of creation, whom John says formed the world. He tabernacled among us because God sent Him forth. Born of a woman.

Now, Paul, why are you stating the obvious? Who here is not born of a woman? Well, there's a point that he's trying to make here. That the Son was with the father, well and truly, ever before He was born of a woman. "Born of a woman" is the means by which the eternal Son of God entered into the world. When he says "born of a woman," he is indicating that the Son was sent forth, meaning He was preexistent with the father from all eternity. And God sent Him forth. And the means by which He came through was the same means by which you and I come through. Born of a woman. In the lowly manger of Bethlehem, there among the animals, the eternal Son of God robed in human flesh, lived a menial, humble life by means of a woman. Born under the law. Not under the law in regards to its guilt. Not under the law with regards to the shame. But under the law with regards to its rule. For the law brings sin and death and condemnation to those who cannot keep it, which is all of us. But for Jesus Christ, the Son of God, born of a woman, born under the law, He was born under the law to fulfill the law for us. To live the life you and I could never live. To deal with the guilt and sin and condemnation that hang over our heads. You see, God was not going to change His law. God was not going to say, "Oh well, you know what, I'm going to let My holiness go for a moment and let My wrath aside for a moment and just forgive people willy-nilly because I'm not holy any longer because I just feel like being kind." No, no, no. Someone had to live the life that we could not live. Someone had to die the death that we deserved. And that someone had to be perfect. That someone could be none other than God Himself manifest in the flesh because there is no other good enough to take away our sins. As the hymn writer says, "He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in." And so, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to fulfill the law. To what end? To what purpose? Why did God act in such a momentous way in history? Why?

Well, he says here that He acted with the intention, in verse number 5, "to redeem us from the curse," or from the law, "to redeem us." We who were enslaved, we who were imprisoned, we who are under the law's curse, need deliverance. God did not send His Son into the world for good people, for there is none righteous, no, not one. God did not send His Son into the world merely as a moral example for us to mimic after and follow. God did not send His Son into the world so that He might give us good teachings, as it were, alone, so that we might learn how to live and how to behave once He left us. God sent His Son into the world to redeem us. To buy us. To rescue us. Because our condition was that we were children in bondage, under slavery, in prison, shut up under the law, dead in our relationship to God. And God, in mercy, sent His Son to redeem us. To rescue us. To snatch us out of our misery and give us hope. To give us life.

To redeem us from the law. From the very accusations of the law that was accusing our consciences and making us feel like we will never be able to rise to acceptance before God. And God says, "Here's the blood of My Son. Therein is acceptance. Therein is justification. Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. If you believe on Him, if you trust in Him who is the propitiation for your sins, you will be counted righteous in the sight of God, though you've broken the law, though you are guilty, though you're in sin, though you are ostracized and separated from the life of God. You will be brought near because of the Savior that came to redeem. To redeem us." Isn't that beautiful?

But He did not just come to redeem us. He came in order, as verse 5 says, "that we might receive the adoption as sons." To make the children of hell the children of heaven. To make those who were the sons of darkness the sons of light. To make those who were separated from the family of God, to be a father to the fatherless. To bring into the family those that were outside of the family, through redemption, through delivering us from our bondage.

Look, we can sing the praises of redemption, and we will, my friends. Oh, brothers and sisters, we will sing the praises of redemption as long as we live and all throughout eternity. But never forget that the God who redeemed us has more than just redeemed us. He has given us a new name. He has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus. He has not only redeemed us but adopted us as His very own sons, so that we don't just stand before Him as righteous because of the blood of Jesus Christ, because of the justification work of the Son, but we also stand before Him as His very own children.

Now that is love unfathomable. So much so that John the Apostle says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, those in bondage, we who were enslaved, that we should be called the children of

God, the sons of God. Us. Enemies of God. Us, haters of God. Us, violators of God's law. Us, turning our face against God, not caring about God, not thinking about God. God calling us sons. God raising us to the highest privilege known among men, to be called sons of God. To be brought into the family. God says, 'I'm not only going to just redeem you and make you righteous in My sight, I'm going to take you up as My own child.'

To bring us into an inheritance. To love us with the love of a father. And to cherish us all the days of our lives as if we were as a little child in the arms of a heavenly father. In case you have been wondering why Natalie and I are dark and Arab looking and our son is blonde-haired, blue eyes, let me remove all doubt for you this morning and let you know that he is our adopted son. He is our son. No different to any of your children that belong to you by natural generation in terms of his name, in terms of the promises that are his, because he now belongs to our family.

But there was once upon a time where he was alienated from the privileges of belonging to the Kura family. Not that there are many privileges to belong to the Kura family. He's got a pretty good grandpa and grandma. He was once isolated from filial love and from the hope of having that inheritance one day passed down to him as those who receive that by mercy of reason of their relationship to the family. But Johan has received the adoption as sons, so that according to God's grace and in the fullness of God's time in our own relationship to him, God moved us by His providence, by His mercy, to choose Johan and to have him as our son. It was a grace. It was something that he received. And now, due to that, he bears the name Kura. On his birth certificate, it says Johan Kura. He is our son.

Now, when I say, or when someone says, he is our adopted son, it is not talking as a qualifier to show that he is any lesser son than anyone else's son. It is rather to demonstrate the means by which he is a full son, a son who receives the full privileges, the full inheritance. And this is what God wants us to understand about the adoption of sons. Yes, we are not sons in the sense that we are proceeded from the father from all eternity like the Lord Jesus, the divine Son, of course. But God wants us to recognize that the adoption of sons means full sonship with regards to the inheritance, with regards to the blessings, with regards to the love, with regards to the care, with regards to the security, with regards to everything that is handed down from a father and a mother to a son.

And so, he is not an adopted son in that he were different or lesser than a son, but adopted is not that qualifier but the means to show that he is of equal status, an inheritor of the full rights and privileges of a Kura. And this is so vital for us to understand that J.I. Packer says this about adoption as sons in his book "Knowing God." He says this: "You sum up the whole

New Testament teaching in a single phrase if you speak of it as a revelation of the fatherhood of the holy creator. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child and having God as his father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all." That's pretty serious, isn't it? We think we got a handle on Christianity because we understand justification by faith. We think we got a handle on Christianity because we can tell you certain doctrines and point to certain passages of scripture. How well do you know the truth that you are a child and daughter of God by reason of that mercy that you have been received, you've received adoption as sons, as God's grace, and now bear the name of the father, so when you come to Him in prayer, you can cry, as we look at, "Abba, Father."

No longer do we come to Him as slaves or as servants or those that have to simply, we don't have access, as it were, to Him, or to have some activity in order to approach Him, or to have some kind of obedience in order to satisfy Him. What the Bible is teaching us is that God loves us as sons and has received us. This is the highest privilege of the children of God, and God sent forth His Son in order that we might become sons. But God didn't end there. He acted in such a way as to make us sons, but look at it says in verse number six, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, 'Abba, Father.'" God not only sends forth His Son to make us sons, but God sends forth the Spirit of His Son, who comes into our hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father."

The Spirit of God is given to the children of God in order that the children of God might know that their relationship to God is not merely built on mere deductions and intellectualism and a great knowledge reservoir, but they might know in intimate relationship that God loves them, that they might experience the love of a father. Christianity is meant to be a dynamic experience of our sonship, not just the isolated truths apart from their practical implications and experiences in our lives. And God not only sent forth His Son in order to make us sons so we can think of ourselves as sons, but He also sent forth the Spirit of His Son so that we might feel ourselves to be sons.

That's important to God. And He sent the Spirit of His Son. And He sent the Spirit of His Son. The Holy Spirit who cries out in our hearts, "Abba, Father." Now, this is not you crying out, which is Romans 8 talks about that. This is rather the Spirit crying out in our hearts, "Abba, Father," which obviously translates in our ascending up in prayer, "Abba, Father." But do you get what Paul is trying to show here? This is a work of the Spirit in your heart. This is not something you put on because you put a

preamble to all your prayers with the words "Abba, Father" or "Our Father." Anyone can do that. That is no mark that you belong to God because you use the name "Father" or because you pray using the term "Father." He's saying God has made you sons, given the Spirit of the Son to you, so that out of your hearts might arise the cry, "Abba, Father," so that you might feel that He is near, that He loves you, that He is your Father, and that you might approach Him as such.

So that you might experience that affection, so that you might know that fellowship, so that you might know the love that a father has for his son as God has for you, and that you might even know the honor that a father bestows upon his son as the father has bestowed upon us in his Son. There are many today that argue that due to bad relationships in our society, that regarding earthly fathers and their children, that people cannot really understand the fatherhood of God. And granted, that is true. That we often interpret our relationship to God in terms of our natural relationships to our father, which in many cases for many of us may have not been very good.

But do not think that that means you can never know the love of a father. What Paul is saying here, it is not your upbringing that determines whether or not you feel the love of the father. He is saying God has acted just as equally as He acted in the sending of His Son, in sending the Spirit so that you might know that you are loved by the father, so that although you may have a father that abused you or cared little for you, or despised you and rejected you and never spoke well of you, and always pointed you down as it were as if he were a slave master, you might know the love of the father towards you in the Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit in your heart. And it will transcend the cold, separated. It will heal that wrong view of God that you may have due to your fatherhood.

It was Thomas Goodwin that said this, "There is a light that cometh and overpowereth a man's soul and assureth him that God is his and he is God's, and that God loveth him from everlasting." He says, "It is a light beyond the light of ordinary faith." It's the faith that God gives to His children and the experience of the Holy Spirit that overpowers and shines light into the darkness of our bondage.

It was John Wesley, who before he came to Christ, may have been regarded as a better Christian than most believers, at least as far as his good deeds and his diligence and outward behavior was concerned. At Oxford University, he established a dedicated group called the Holy Club, of which George Whitfield was a part. And they faithfully attended church. They went. They gathered together. They studied their Bibles together all throughout the day. Often fasted together, and they prayed together. They evangelized in

prisons, and they went out to the workhouses, preaching Christ and evangelizing all over the city. They provided food and clothing and education for the poor children of the city. He was an Anglican clergyman who went on a mission even to America to convert the Indians over there and later wrote this: "I went to America to convert Indians, but oh, who shall convert me?"

Sailing on a ship with the Moravian Christians, they were met with a very big storm at sea. And John and Charles, his brother, were quite troubled by the storm, fearing for their life. But they noticed that these Moravians, including the children, were quite calm and singing praises to God as the ship was rocking like crazy. And he felt like he was going to die. And he was troubled and speaking to them, one of the Moravians asked him, "Do you know that you are a child of God?" "Does the Spirit of God bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God?" Wesley didn't answer. So the Moravian continued, "Do you know Jesus Christ?" John hesitated painfully, then answered like this: "I know that He is the Savior of the world." "True," replied the Moravian, "but do you know He saved you?" And then Wesley could only hope and say, "I hope He died to save me."

And Wesley's searching continued until May 24th, 1738, when he attended at night a religious meeting at Aldersgate in London. And while he was listening to someone reading the preface of Martin Luther's commentary to the book of Romans, he was converted to Christ. He said of that moment, "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, in Christ alone for salvation. And an assurance was given to me that He has taken away my sins, even mine, and has saved me from the law of sin and death." And he goes on later to say, "I had even then, before that time, the faith of a servant, though not that of a son."

The question this morning to you, brothers and sisters, friends here with us also, are you a slave or a son? The question is, have you freely received by faith the sonship that is promised to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ? Or do you serve God in accordance to the law, in accordance to legalism, thinking that your obedience will earn you the love of a father? Do you feel that God accepts you this morning because of what you have done or haven't done in the past week? Or do you know the love of a father to you? Have you ever experienced in some way and in some form the "Abba, Father" crying of the Spirit within us? And what I mean by that is not literally the words coming into your heart, but the sense and the assurance of the love of a father to a son, felt and known by you because of the grace of God in Christ.

If you cannot testify to such things, it is important to ask yourself the question, "Am I a son, or am I yet a slave?" "Do I know God as a son, or do I just know God in a superficial way as a slave?" "Am I trusting in my own good works to get me to heaven, or am I resting in God's grace alone through

faith in Jesus Christ?" You say, "Well, I know I have received the adoption of sons, and I know that God is my father, and there is a sense in my heart that He is my father, but my sense of that is very dim." And how may I know the assurance of the Spirit more in my life?

We need to repair wrong views of God to begin with. Maybe this morning, as a Christian, you have failed to understand exactly what it means to be redeemed. You haven't seen yourself as being received and adopted as God's son and daughter. You look at your lot in life and judge God's favor of you depending on how things are going well with you this day and not in accordance to the inheritance that He has promised for His sons. So many of God's people do not live in the conscious awareness of the wonder of the fact that they have a father. Jesus taught us to pray this way: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Your name." Our Father.

We ought to live as Christians not by the law but according to promise. We should be thinking in terms of God's grace and His love and His kindness and His mercy to us. We should not run into our prayers saying, "God, do this for me, and do that for me, and do this for me, and do that for me," and then point to all the things that we've done for Him. Our prayer lives should be filled with, "Thank you, Father, for saving me. Thank you for sending Your Son. Thank you for delivering me from my bondage." And as you meditate and pray and memorize and think upon what God has done for you in His Son, you will start to recognize and know more deeply, without grieving the Holy Spirit, that there is that cry there in your heart.

It's the Spirit that gives us our assurance that if we continue in sin that grace may abound, we will find out and doubt more or less whether or not we are believers in Christ. But as we confess our sin, we will know that He is faithful and just to forgive our sins. We will hear His tender, soothing balm of forgiveness to our hearts. How often does sin and unbelief grieve the witness of the Spirit in our lives? It's important for us as the people of God not to rest in an outward, externalism of religion, whereby we are under a certain slavish, grievous, non-experiential religiosity. We are no longer slaves, verse 7 says of this text, but are sons, and if sons, we are heirs. God doesn't want us to live in bondage as His people. He wants us to live under the power of His grace that so wrestles us to the ground and helps us cry out to God as our Father.

Perhaps for some of us, it's time to seek the Lord. We are satisfied, as it were, to be called sons, but we live as slaves. Think about it. If God was right now to grant us a conscious awareness and assurance of our sonship, wouldn't you think that we would know what John says when he says, "and His commandments are not grievous"? I think so. Because as that loving father, as it were, picks you up, puts you on his lap, cuddles you, as it were,

kisses you, and embraces you, and then says to you, "Son, can you go get me that from the cupboard?" It's usually a little spring in the child's step as he's felt the love of a father that motivates his obedience for his father. Let's pray.