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Galatians 4:4-7:

We Are...

- I. Redeemed
- II. Sons
- III. Heirs

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Galatians 4:4-7

Dear Friends in Christ.

I came across this observation: "At 20, we worry about what people think about us. At 40, we don't care what people think about us. At 60, we find out that people haven't been thinking about us at all". Well, do we ever wonder how certain people see us, what they are thinking about us, if they are thinking about us? Do we ever do things that will draw more attention to ourselves? Michael Greene wrote:

Although a man can make changes in his life, even positive changes, he still remains the same person and often goes from one kind of problem to another. (Years ago a sports broadcaster said of certain athlete): "He has turned his life around. He used to be depressed and miserable. Now he's miserable and depressed."

Do the questions ever stare at you? "Why am I here? What's my purpose? Where am I going? Who am I?" That's the question we want to explore on this first Sunday of Christmas: "Who am I?" Well...

WE ARE...

I. Redeemed

The Redeemed. "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law...(v.4a)." Redeem. The definition is simple: "to release from blame or debt (Webster)."

I confess, I am unclean, filthy with sin, unacceptable to God. As the Scriptures say, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away (Is.64:6, NIV)." Well, what do we do with filthy rags? We either wash them or throw them away! We all stand in the same place: unclean, filthy with sin, unacceptable to God. The good news is, Christ has redeemed us! The Small Catechism of Luther states what we must each confess: "He has redeemed me from 'all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.' And how has Christ redeemed us? He took my guilt and punishment upon himself." You see, we have been released from blame or debt before God; washed clean.

But there's another part to this. I cannot ignore the words of Paul, they are always there: "For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out (Rm.7:18)." My heart cries out the words of Paul: "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death (Rm.7:24)?" And then comes those most wonderful words: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rm.8:1)." None!

The battle with sin goes on to the grave; the sin and struggle are still there. I ask that you listen to this description of the hell from which Christ has redeemed us, written by Matthew Hafenreffer, a German Lutheran professor at Tübingen, Germany. Hafenreffer died in 1616. He wrote:

For in perpetual anguish, with dreadful trembling, in shame, confusion, ignominy (disgrace), inextinguishable fire, in weeping and gnashing of teeth, amidst that which is eternal and terrible, torn away from the grace and favor of God, they must quake among devils, and will be tortured without end to eternity. These future torments of the damned far surpass all the penetration of the human mind...

Some might think that this description of hell is just too horrid! How could God do this? But that's not the question. The question is, do we understand how much God hates sin, every sin, regardless of how small we might think it is? "The wages of sin is death," even if it involves eating only one piece of forbidden fruit!

Beloved brothers and sisters, Jesus entered this world, stood in front of us and moved us off the highway we were traveling, the one that leads to hell, and took upon himself the hell you and I deserve.
We Are The Redeemed.

II. Sons

And look, our text says we have been redeemed “so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’ So, you are no longer a slave but a son... (5-7).” **We Are Sons.**

You understand that the adoption of sons includes women. I don't know the source, but it has been stated that, “In many ancient societies, daughters were not considered legal heirs in the same way sons were. By calling all believers ‘sons,’ the Bible is communicating that Christian women have the same inheritance and status as men...”.

Therefore, in Christ we are family. In his prayer for the Ephesians, which is his prayer for us, Paul prays: “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith... (Eph.3:14-17).” Please note the words, *the father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named*. The faith in Christ that God has worked in us makes us sons of God - one eternal family. Consequently, God's word says, “So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Eph.2:19).”

All of this is quite a contrast to where we were prior to the faith God worked in us, as Paul says, “...you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world (Eph.2:12).” Without Christ we were standing on the outside looking into a deep dark chasm of fire and tears. In Christ we belong to God and to one another.

III. Heirs

And so, our text closes with, “So you are no longer a slave but a son, and if son, then an heir through God.” **We Are Heirs.** Paul writes, “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Rm.8:16-17). I know, the last thing anyone wanted to hear was, *provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him*. We can run but we can't hide from Jesus words: ‘If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you (Jn.15:18-19).’ There is a growing antagonism toward the church in this country.

I must put this word of God in front of you, this word that has been a consistent part of my Christian life from the beginning and has seen me through the trials of life and personal struggles with sin. I've referred to it many times.

Blessed to be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope (**as opposed to the hope of this world that ends at the grave; a dead hope**) through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable (**death is forever out of the picture**), undefiled (**not messed up by sin**), unfading (**it will never lose its incomprehensible joy**), kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith - more precious than gold though it is tested by fire - may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ (**Our faith will be tested**). Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls (**not the promises of riches and happiness with this world as spewed out of the mouths of the miserable, false preachers**).

In Christ we are the “redeemed”. Without Him we would be the “condemned”. In Christ we are “sons” of God, His children. Without him we would be eternal nobodies. In Christ we are “heirs” of an eternal Kingdom of joy and peace. Without Him there is nothing but eternal darkness and tears. We are eternally saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ who secured our forgiveness and unending life. The truth of this must go with us every day!

Humans have spent the entire span of this world's existence searching for peace. Tell me, how close are we? The only true peace on earth is the love of God in Jesus Christ, the love that is impressed upon us through the written and spoken Word and the visible Word of the Sacraments, and with that, the unending peace that will greet us in eternal life.

Lutheran professor and author, Harold L. Senkbeil, wrote: “But tomorrow is another day. I return to the life I live every day (on this earth) filled with both joy and struggle, heartache and gladness. And yet there will be peace in that life, the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, which transcends all understanding” (Harold L. Senkbeil, *DYING TO LIVE*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis. 1994, p.180).

We know the promise, “Whoever believes has eternal life (Jn.3:16).” **We Are God's Children** - forever! Don't ignore that!

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott