

Series: *Pulpit Sermons*

Title: "Sons Who Can Cry Out: The Great Privilege" (Galatians 4:4-6)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/23/2019

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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)

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 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.

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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.

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.

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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.

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

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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.

### **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.

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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.

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

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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.

### **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:

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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:

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:

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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 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

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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.

*We will present the second half of this message, and a full transcript of the entire sermon, on our next program.*

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