

BEING A SON OF GOD

When Paul wrote, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3.26),¹ he wanted to emphasize to the Galatians the universal nature of the adoption by God of all believers, Jews and Gentiles, through Jesus Christ.² Jewish rigorists were stirring up the believers in Galatia by binding old covenant practices, such as circumcision, on them (see Galatians 5.3-4; 6.12; cf. Acts 15.1). By doing this, the Judaizers were destroying the liberty and the freedom that the Galatian believers had in Christ (Galatians 5.1). Apparently, the Jewish antagonists thought they had a monopoly on God’s spiritual blessings because of their physical descent from Abraham. “Not so!” says Paul. The promise of God’s blessings to the descendants of Abraham was based on faith; therefore, it must be received in faith (Galatians 3.6-9). Paul makes it plain that the recipients of God’s inheritance are those who believe in Christ.

Why did God give the law then? Its purpose was to make us aware of our sinfulness and thereby cause us to realize our need for a Savior (Galatians 3.19; cf. Romans 3.20). In this way, the law served as a “guardian” (Greek *paidagogos*)³ “to lead us to Christ” (Galatians 3.24). The Jews temporarily were under the Mosaic covenant until the coming of Christ. After Christ came, the law was needed no longer, since its purpose had been fulfilled (Galatians 3.25).

¹Scripture quotations are from *New International Version: Spirit of the Reformation Bible*, General Editor, Richard Pratt (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003).

²Note the inclusiveness of Paul in this passage, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3.28). I would assume, with this clarification, that Paul’s use of “sons of God” (Greek *huiioi theou*) is not specific with regard to ethnicity, social status, or even gender.

³Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort, translators, *The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament*, edited by J. D. Douglas (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990), 660.

For the believers in Galatia, and for us today, being “a son of God” or “a child of God” begins when we “put on Christ” (Greek *christon enedusasthe*)⁴ in baptism (Galatians 3.27). Paul is saying, since all of you have been united with Christ on the same basis (i.e., an obedient faith), then all of you are heirs of God and recipients of his wonderful blessings. It makes no difference whether you are circumcized or not, if you are the slave of another or possess personal freedom, if you are a man or a woman. God does not care! Regardless of your circumstances, if you belong to Christ, you are God’s child.⁵

Praise God for the adoption that he has given to each of us. And if we appreciate his love and his concern for us, we will do our best to be obedient and not rebellious children.

⁴Ibid.

⁵I do not think Paul is denying the reality of these distinctions and how they function in the body of Christ, the church, or in society in general. He seems to be reflecting on how dear each one of us is to our God because of the work of our Savior, Jesus the Messiah.