

Text: Gal 4.1-10
St Stephen's

June 16/17, 2007
Sat/Sun

Passing On The Blessing

Happy Father's Day to all you Dads!! I think Dad's are the most **underappreciated** species on earth. **Bill Cosby** observed once that boys grow up spending hours and hours throwing balls and going to games with their Dads. And when they make it big on the college football scene, before the big bowl game they get interviewed, and the first thing they say is, "Hi Mom!!" Totally underappreciated. I hope you take time to appreciate your dad this day.

If you were to say something about how you appreciate your dad, what would you say? Well, I am going to Ohio after services to spend the afternoon with my Dad. I'll tell you what I appreciate about him...

- He taught me **right from wrong**...
- He taught me I have **a debt to life**, and should leave the world a better place for my passing...
- Is a **generous** man who gave and gave and gave again to his sons...
- He was a man who **never gave up** on me... when I was ready to leave him behind as my father, he would hold onto his son...

My Dad had a lot he wanted to pass on to his boys. Dads, **what would you want to pass on to your kids?** How are you going to do it?

As we continue our look at Galatians, this theme of how to pass on life's greatest blessings is exactly what Paul is talking about.

As we turn to Chapter 4, Paul raises this theme with the word '**heirs**' and uses an illustration from **Roman family life**...

I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no better than a slave, though he is the owner of all the estate; but he is under guardians and trustees until the date set by the father.

Galatians 4:1-2 (RSV)

Paul is saying that every father wants to pass on the fruit of his life to his

children. But in Roman families, it happened in a special way. **It happened in stages.** There was the first **stage of childhood**, during which you were under the oversight of tutors and guardians. You might be the heir, but you had no rights, because your day of adulthood, your day of inheritance, your day of liberation had not yet come. So during the season of childhood, you had no more rights than a slave.

But when the day of inheritance came, you became the owner of the estate.

Paul says **that is what happens with the Gospel.** In your old life, you were under forces of law and life that held you captive. But... (vs 4) God set the day of our liberation and 'sent his son', and slaves became sons. And sons are heirs.

And how does this happen? It happens by grace.

Consider this scenario: Your dad owns a billion-dollar business. One day he invites you to his office and says, "I plan to turn over everything to you. Here is my plan. I want you to work under me and learn the business. When I retire, I will give the company to you. But in the meantime, you must follow my orders to the last detail. I'll be watching you like a hawk, and if you foul up, if you become lazy, if you try to do things your own way—then I'll leave you nothing at all."

That is **the performance plan.** Are you ready to sign up for that? But there is another option...

Suppose the same father said, "It's all yours, I give it to you. No strings, no trial period—just because you are my son/ my daughter. It gives me joy to pass on everything I own to you. What I want most of all is to work shoulder to shoulder with you. It's going to be trying at times, and you'll be rolling up your sleeves - when you become weary and discouraged, just remember we are in this together. I've got your back."

That is the grace plan. Are you ready to sign up for that?

God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so

that he could adopt us as his very own children.

Galatians 4:5 (NLT)

In Roman culture, a wealthy, childless man could take a slave youth and make that slave his child and heir. The adopted person was no longer a slave. He became **a full heir** to his new family, guaranteed **all legal rights** to his father's property. He was not a second-class son; he was equal to all other sons in his father's family. That person's **origin or past was no longer a factor** in his legal standing. **That is the grace plan.**

Max Lucado says that **"Adoptive parents understand the grace plan better than anyone.** Us biological parents know well the longing to have a child. But in many cases our **cribs were filled easily.** We decided to have a child and a child came. In fact, sometimes the child came with no decision.

But not adoptive parents. Every child was a planned child, a dreamed for child. A sought after child. Adoptive parents understand God's passion to adopt us. They know what it means to feel an empty space inside. They know what it means to **hunt**, to set out **on a mission**, and **take responsibility** for a child with a spotted past and a dubious future."

Yesterday I stood at a graveside with three adoptive children as we laid their father's ashes to rest. All three of them knew the passion and the love and the commitment of their mom and dad to them, and the rich reward that came from those adoptions.

Here's how Paul says it...

So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir.

Galatians 4:7 (RSV)

I like the Living Bible paraphrase of that...

Now we are no longer slaves but God's own sons. And since we are his sons, everything he has belongs to us, for that is the way God planned.

Galatians 4:7 (The Living Bible)

God planned it, purposed it, longed for it, searched us out, called us,

purchased us at a fearsome cost, brought us to himself, and poured out his wealth and blessings on us. *"Everything he has belongs to us!"* He is in it with us and he's got our backs. **That is the grace plan.** It is available to everyone who believes in Jesus. It is the gospel.

WSJ Article on fathers this weekend...

When **modern psychiatry** was beginning, they had a common view of fathers as **godlike, omnipotent figures that impose law and order.** "But psychiatrists increasingly realize that when a child receives love, approval and guidance from a godlike figure, the young soul develops a crucial sense of importance."

Mary Gordon writes in "The Shadow Man," her biography of David Gordon, the father who died when she was 7 - *"As if he knew he would die prematurely, not live to see me reach adulthood, my father left books for me that he inscribed in his handwriting, I never feel so prized as when I see my name in his handwriting. He has inscribed me in the world. He has never ceased to think of me."*

This is what **our fathers have been at their best...** Larger than life figures across the days of our youth, **framing** our world with a sense of right, wrong, of responsibility and purpose. But also **anchoring** our lives with an unbreakable, 'never give up on you no matter what' kind of love.

To all you underappreciated Dads, I say, you've got one of the great callings in the world. **Thank you** for being one of God's dads.

But **there is a greater Father.** To him also this day we pause to **give our thanks.** For he, above all, has **framed** our world with a sense of right, wrong, of responsibility and purpose. But also **anchoring** our lives with an unbreakable, 'never give up on you no matter what' kind of love.

He stands behind every earthly father. He reaches out to every orphaned soul. He loves to adopt sons and daughters.. **even on days like this...** and make them heirs of his kingdom.

Prayers:

Thank you for our Dads...

Thank you Father, for adopting us, and pouring out your blessings on us...

Perhaps there are today some here who feel as though they are still orphans, pushed and pulled by forces of life beyond their control, who have not yet come to the day of liberation and freedom... have not yet found you as the Father above all Fathers... "Lord Jesus Christ, I trust myself to you... I need your freedom... I want to be in your family... a son, a daughter of the greatest family of all.. I come to you today."

Under your grace all your adopted sons and daughters learn to say, *"I never feel so prized as when I see my name in your handwriting. You have inscribed me in the world. You never cease to think of me."*