

**SERIES: Who Am I? Discovering Our God Given Identity. (Slide #1)**

**TITLE: “We Are the Children of God”**

**TEXT: Galatians 3:26-4:7**

**DATE: August 5, 2007**

## I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. We look for a fourth week at our God-given identity
  1. During the sabbatical, word that kept coming to me from the Lord was this: **(Slide #2)** *The Church does not understand who they are. God’s people have an identity crisis. The people of God need to be reminded of their God-given identity and challenged to lay hold of it.*
  2. **(Slide #3)** As we have begun our time of self-discovery we so far have discovered two truths:
    - a. WE ARE BLESSED.
    - b. WE ARE CITIZENS OF A HOLY NATION.
    - c. WE ARE A PRIESTHOOD OF BLESSINGS – we bless by our presence, but we also bless by out intentional actions meant to bring blessings to our communities.
  3. It seems to me, friends, that if we were to stop the series of sermons here, there is already enough for us to feel pretty good about our identity in Christ.
    - a. There’s enough that we should be rejoicing in our good standing.
    - b. There’s enough that we should be living better – more in line with our identity.
    - c. There’s enough to have changed our entire outlook on life.
  4. My prayer is that a transformation is happening and that we are living in the realization of who we are through God our Father, Jesus our Savior, and the Holy Spirit our powerful guide into all truth.
- B. That having been said, there is more to our identity in Christ that we have the honor of laying hold of as God’s people.
- C. As I have done over the past three weeks, let me just begin with a brief illustration of the point we want to look at this morning. **(Slide #4)**
  1. I can’t tell anyone else’s story, so if you don’t mind; I want to tell you a story about myself.
  2. Many of you have known me for thirteen years and you will be able to attest to what I am about to say; some of you are just getting to know me and so a lot of this information will be new to you.
  3. Let me tell you some facts about myself:
    - a. As was stated two weeks ago, I was born at 5:02 PM on March 27, 1961 in St. Mary’s hospital in Kansas City, MO to Clinton Eugene and Gladys Elaine Lain.
    - b. When I was released from the hospital, my first home was an upstairs apartment over top of a Rescue Mission that my father and mother ran, ministering to alcoholics and street people in Kansas City, MO.
    - c. Soon after my birth, my life began to take on a nomad kind of existence, moving from one town and state to another, and multiple houses – I lived in 20 different houses by the time I turned 20 years old.
    - d. Not only were the moves frequent, but they were wide spread: Kansas City to Maine to Kentucky to Illinois to Ohio to Pennsylvania to Michigan to France to Ohio to Haiti and then back to Ohio.
    - e. Once I lived in three different houses in one year – all in the same town as the parsonage moved three times, and twice I changed schools in the middle of a school year.
    - f. By the time I was fourteen years old, my life had taken me to twelve different countries, living

- for at least a year in three of those countries (counting the United States).
- g. By the time I was thirteen years old I could speak three different languages – I can only remember one-and-a-half now.
  - h. Using the titles of my parents, my home over my early years changed names: it was the home of parents who were a chemist, a third grade teacher, a preacher, a biology teacher, a graduate student, a missionary.
  - i. Throughout those years, the personality of a person by the name of Donald Lain was shaped:
    - (1) Mine was a Christian home, and because of that I chose to be Christian.
    - (2) Mine was the home of a father who was a choleric – because of that I am somewhat impatient and often passionate and pushy about things that matter to me in life. I can tend to be overbearing and often stubborn.
    - (3) Mine was the home of a father and family who loved to debate – because of that I have no problem disagreeing with people and arguing for another point of view, often to the chagrin of my wife, my children, and perhaps many of you. We debated as entertainment in my household.
    - (4) Mine was the home of a mother who was a problem solver, especially people problems – because of that, whether I want to admit it or not, I tend to be one who wants to eliminate problems, often to the point of being confrontational.
    - (5) Mine was the home of leaders – both my mom and dad were leaders, sometimes leading even when no one asked them to. Because of that, leading is natural, but it is sometimes a struggle when I must also learn to be quiet and respect the leadership of others (even when it looks like the leading is going in the wrong direction).
    - (6) Most likely because I moved so much, I am an introvert and struggle to form – and even desire – close friendships. To form friendships and lose them 20 times would have killed me, so it was easier to just be distant.
    - (7) Mine was a home that was to a certain degree and level, legalistic. It wasn't obnoxiously so, but enough that I tend to hold to the fact that there are some things that are absolutely right and some things that are absolutely wrong and I live by that. You can call that a negative or a positive – you chose.
    - (8) Well, I could go on, but I probably have already told you enough – maybe too much.
4. Now there's a reason why I have gone on a little bit, telling you my history.
  5. Here's the reason: WHO I AM AS A PERSON TODAY HAS AN AWFUL LOT TO DO WITH THE FACT THAT I AM A SON OF CLINTON EUGENE AND GLADYS ELAINE LAIN.
    - a. In listening to my story, you each may have concluded at different times that some of my character traits are good and some are not so good. Truth is, no matter what someone else may want to think about those things, they are what they are and they did not come into existence in a vacuum.
    - b. Personally, while some of my character traits may be seen as negative, I don't chose to see it that way – God can take everything and use it for His purpose. . . .thank God for that.
  6. Folks, here is a truth that cannot be changed and also a truth that has significant ramifications: I am a son. I carry around the name and the characteristics of my parents. They brought me into this world and helped shape me into the person that I am. They are not the only ones who have influenced my life, but they certainly played the biggest role.
  7. There is significant power in sonship/daughtership. It is one of the primary distinguishing marks of every single one of us here this morning.

- D. Well, this leads me to the forth key identifying mark of the believer, and it is a significant one. I almost feel as if I should announce it instead of just stating it, because it's pretty exciting. . . .

## II. (Slide #5) IDENTIFYING MARK #3: WE ARE "THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF GOD."

- A. Folks, I sure hope you're seeing things the way I am, because the way I see it, week-by-week this sermon series is getting sweeter and sweeter.
1. It would be enough to declare that we are blessed, but there was more.
  2. It would be enough to further state that we are citizens of the nation of God, but there was more.
  3. It would be enough to announce that we are a priesthood of blessings, but the good news doesn't stop there.
  4. When this sermon series is over, there will be still more identifying marks that we will not even hit on, because our identity in God is so immense.
- B. I have to tell you, though, there's something about this fourth identifying mark that sends chills up and down the spine of anyone who can feel at all.
- C. Here is a statement that is full of truth and truly amazing: If you have in fact responded in obedience to God's call in you life, surrendered your sins and your life to Him, and now walk by faith, God's word declares this majestic truth: You are a child of God.
- D. Well, just so you don't think I'm making it up, look with me at just one of many references to this truth found in the compact declaration of Paul in Galatians 3:26-29: (Slide #6) "*You are the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seek, and heirs according to the promise.*"
- E. Did we hear it? Did the truth hit you as the word was read?:
1. We are the sons/daughters of God.
  2. We belong to God.
  3. I say hallelujah! How about you? That's downright Good News. That rejoicing news.
- F. Well the declaration causes me to ask two critical questions that are answers in our text this morning.
- G. (Slide #7) **QUESTION #1: HOW DID THIS HAPPEN? HOW DID WE BECOME GOD'S CHILDREN.**
1. Well, this is an important question, but one with an answer.
  2. The answer is two-fold: the first is the divine answer and the second is the human response.
  3. (Slide #8) THE DIVINE ANSWER: As we read on down in our text, we come to the critical words in Galatians 4:4-5. Listen to Paul's words: "*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights as sons.*"
  4. Now folks, this verse is a sermon in and of itself, but I won't turn it into a full sermon. In essence, here is what is being proclaimed by Paul:
    - a. "But when the time had fully come" – this speaks of a preformed plan by God that was to be executed at a perfectly chosen time.
    - b. "God sent his Son" – to put it most clearly, He sent Himself, for God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not three persons but one person expressed in three different ways.
    - c. "Born of a woman, and born under the law" – in other words, born in a way that took on our form so that the bondage of our humanity could be broken from our level."
    - d. "To redeem those under the law" – to redeem is to buy back, to reclaim, to return to the original

owner. It demanded a cost – Jesus died on a Cross to pay for our redemption, and it speaks of an amazing result – we are once again owned by the original owner, God.

- e. “That we might receive the full rights as sons” – the result of such an act of redemption is that we become “sons of God.” We are no longer slaves to sin, but instead sons of righteousness.
5. **(Slide #9) THE HUMAN RESPONSE:** In response to this act of initiation by God, we are told of the human response in 3:26 – “*You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*”
6. Again, this could be a sermon in and of itself, but in essence this is what is being said:
  - a. Sonship happens when in response to Christ’s sacrifice, we receive Him “through faith.”
  - b. Sonship also happens when we are baptized in Christ – in other words, our sins are put to death and we are resurrected to new life as Christ died and rose again.
  - c. Sonship happens when we take off the old clothing of sin and replace it with the righteous clothing of Christ in us.
7. Can we grasp the miracle of what is being said here by Paul:
  - a. He declares “You are the sons/daughter/children of God.
  - b. How? Through Jesus Christ/God who came and died on a cross to pay for the sins of the world and “Buy or purchase us” with His blood.
  - c. How? All we have to do is accept His sacrifice and by faith live a for him.
  - d. It is miraculous. It is amazing. WE ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD.
8. This leads then to the second question and it is this. . . .
- H. **(Slide #10) QUESTION #2: WHAT DOES IT MEAN? WHAT ARE THE LIFE RAMIFICATIONS OF SUCH A TRUTH?**
  1. To be honest, this proclamation means more than one sermon can declare, but let me give us a taste of what it means to be called the children of God.
  2. **(Slide #11) It is a statement of ownership – we belong to God.**
  3. **(Slide #12) It is a statement of surrender – we give ourselves to God.**
  4. **(Slide #13) It is a statement of protection – we are under the care of God.**
  5. **(Slide #14) It is a statement of unity – we are one under God.**
  6. **(Slide #15) It is a statement of inheritance – we are heirs of the covenant.**
  7. **(Slide #16) It is a statement of lifestyle – we are to live like God: Cloth ourselves in Christ.**

### III. **(Slide #17) OUR RESPONSE: WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES ALL THIS MAKE? WHAT MUST OUR RESPONSE BE?**

- A. **First, we are challenged to embrace our sonship.**
- B. **Second, we are challenged to act like God’s children.**
- C. **Third, we are challenged to understand our family status – we are all God’s children which makes us all valuable to God – equally valuable.**