



In last week's passage Paul hammered the nails into the coffin of living by law. Having identified that we are most certainly *not* 'under law' people, in this Sunday's passage (Galatians 3v26-4v7) he addressed the question of who we then are. This passage serves as a wonderful identity check for us.

1 – Know that we are now *in Christ* through faith (3v26-29)

We were captive under the law (v23), but Christ has come (v24), and we are now "in Christ Jesus" (v26). This changes everything, Paul writes, soaking this passage with pictures and explanations of what it means to be "in Christ". It is the most extraordinary change of status. We have gone from guilty to guilt-free. But the change of status is only the beginning. To be "in Christ" is to have a whole new relationship, a whole new life in him. And to be "in Christ" is a personal thing. God has called, known, chosen and loved each one of us intimately. But it is more than a personal thing. Paul emphasises that we "are all one in Christ Jesus" (v28). We are far more closely united as Christians than we might look, feel, sound, seem or even want to be! Christ has united what had been divided (v28). He has not removed all diversity, distinction and difference, but he has removed all division.

2 – Know that we are now *adopted as God's children* (4v1-5)

Paul begins chapter 4 with an illustration of legal guardians and wards (v1-2). The underage heir may appear to be the same as the child of the servant, he writes, but they couldn't be more different as the heir "owns the whole estate" (v1). So

we, when under the law prior to Christ's coming, were like underage heirs, not yet having received what was promised us (v3). But in Christ we have come of age! God has sent his Son to make us sons (v4-5). Through Christ we have been redeemed (bought out of slavery) and adopted into the family of God and given the rights and privilege (whether we're male or female) of first-born sons.

3 – Know that we are now *filled with the Spirit* (4v6-7)

Perhaps this seems too good to be true? Can we be sure such a great inheritance will really be ours? We can be confident, says Paul, because we are already receiving our inheritance! We are heirs in a future sense (3v29, 4v7), but we are also heirs who have already come of age (4v3-5). The part of our inheritance we are already receiving is the Spirit (v6). The Spirit is God's personal presence living with us. Beyond what any Old Testament believer could have imagined, and better, even, than having Jesus with us in the flesh (see John 16), the Spirit *is* God living with us! In the words of J. D. Greear, he takes God's presence and makes it personal.¹ He helps us to *feel* that we are God's children, and he is God with us in every moment of every day, both individually and corporately as church.

Here are a few questions you might want to use with your group...

1. Briefly summarise: who are we, and who are we not, according to this passage?
2. Why is it that we need this identity check? (Why is it so hard to remember and live as who we are? Why do we find it easy to slip back into living by the law?)
3. What does it mean to be "in Christ"? Where else might we go in the Bible to explore this concept?
4. How as a church are we already displaying, growing in and expressing our God-given unity? In what ways could we grow?
5. How is being an adopted child different to being a slave (perhaps consider what happens when we fall short)?
6. In what ways do you fail to appreciate or play down the privileges of having the Spirit? How could we grow in our appreciation of being Spirit-filled people?

¹ J. D. Greear, "What's better than Jesus beside you?", November 5 2014, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/whats-better-than-jesus-beside-you>