

Son – or slave?

Identity Part 1

From eternity past the Father has had a deep, intimate love-relationship with his son Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It has always been a totally fulfilling and satisfying relationship. There was nothing missing. There was no need of anyone or anything else. And yet, the Father loved His Son so much, that He decided He was going to long for a whole big family of sons, all like Jesus... so here we are! Jesus is the firstborn Son.



For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers (Rom 8:29).

It is your destiny to be His son (this is not about male or female but about our relationship with our Father and our position as heir). Now, it is all very well knowing as a piece of factual information that we are sons, and even knowing in our head that God sees it that way, but the question we must each ask ourselves is, do I feel, think, and act like a son of God? Am I experiencing this personal relationship with my Heavenly Father, and do I live it out in my daily life? And if not why not? If I am not fully embracing everything God says and thinks about me, then I need to know what is preventing me so that I can overcome it, and enter in.

We all started out as slaves. Mankind was in slavery because of what our ancestors, Adam and Eve, did in the Garden. Therefore we are all born into slavery, and we are all spiritual orphans, separated from God. Adam and Eve became spiritual orphans because they were ejected and expelled from the Garden, sold into slavery because they chose to follow the pathway of the knowledge of good and evil, rather than the pathway of the tree of life that God had designed for them. God wants us to turn away from following the pathway of the knowledge of good and evil, to come back and embrace the tree of life. Even good things, if we do not get them from God, can still lead us into slavery.

So because of Adam and Eve's sin, naturally speaking slavery is our heritage. It affects how we feel and think about ourselves and about God. Keep going that way and we end up with a wounded soul as a result of trying to meet our own needs in the only way we know how – from the world.

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? (Rom 6:16).

Adam and Eve chose to present themselves as slaves to sin, and the result was death, both physical and spiritual. But Jesus has given us a choice now: we can present ourselves to God.

So, who is your master?

One master brings life; the other brings death. We have a choice about who we serve, and it is a choice offered to every one of us. I choose to serve the perfect God of love rather than a fallen being who wants only to destroy me.

This is how God made that choice possible for us:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16).



God has paid the price, and bought us back so that he could adopt us as His own children, just like Jesus. Awesome! We have been redeemed, bought back from slavery by Jesus, given a new home and a family. We are adopted as sons into the family of the King. We are royalty: princes and princesses, regardless of our history or background. What we have done, what has been done to us,

none of that has any effect whatsoever on how God sees us. We look just like Jesus to Him, holy and perfect and righteous. God does not hold our past against us, unlike the devil who constantly accuses us and tries to cause us to remember our past. Since God chooses not to remember it, neither should we!

We have been born again into a new family with a new identity. We have a new heavenly home (which we can engage with now, not only when we die) and are ourselves a home of God. We have a new, heavenly citizenship, and a new (yet eternal) identity and purpose. We have come into sonship, into a relationship with our Father. In that family relationship we find acceptance, affection, affirmation, approval – and unlimited access to our Father, to Jesus, and to the Holy Spirit.

Back to our question: who is your master?

Slaves and orphans struggle with the fear of trusting, and therefore live a life of independence. If we cannot trust anyone else, we will feel we are on our own. God does not want us to feel alone. If, because of that fear, we fail to fully grasp that we are sons, then there is no way we will act like sons either.

We may find it hard to trust because of past experience. We have all been hurt, all been damaged, all been let down by people. We may be afraid of being hurt again, rejected, or disappointed. We may suffer from fear of failure, or fear of losing control.

But losing control is the very thing we need to do. We need to surrender the control of our life to God, and trust Him to have our best interests at heart. We have to stop being independent, and learn to trust Him as our Father. When we do, we embrace everything He has for us, because he will cause our destiny to be outworked in our lives.

You see, salvation does not make us slaves (servile followers of a tyrannical God). That is what religion presents, and it is the lie the devil uses to lead astray so many people who would otherwise escape his clutches and turn to God. No, this great salvation makes us sons (grateful children of a loving, affectionate Father). That is the difference between religion and relationship. Religion will always put us into bondage (the word 'religion' even comes from a Latin word meaning 'bound up'), but relationship will bring us freedom.

To be liberated from slavery is wonderful. But then to be adopted as a son and made a co-heir of the Father's entire estate is absolutely astounding! If we were to fully understand what it is to have access to the wealth of our Father (and I'm really not talking about money, it is so much more than that), it would totally transform our lives. Because of our adoption, the nature of our whole relationship with God has radically changed. We are set free from that religious perception of God as a hard taskmaster just looking for every opportunity to punish us, a God we have to somehow try to appease by doing our good works (only to find that nothing we can do is ever quite good enough). There is no punishment in store for us as His children, just love and acceptance, forgiveness, grace and mercy!

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3-5).

The fact that your inheritance is 'reserved in heaven for you' does not mean that you have to wait until you die to go and enjoy it. Jesus has opened up heaven for us and we are seated there with Him: everything there is for us to discover, and we can walk in that inheritance as sons right now. And God is looking to reveal more and more of what it means to be saved, what it means to be part of His family, what it means to have a personal relationship with Him.

The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy... (John 10:10a AMP).

The enemy, the father of lies, wants to remind us of our past and our history in order to rob us of our present and our future. He wants to rob us of our adoptive inheritance and destroy our relationship with God. Yet Jesus went on to say,

I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows) (John 10:10b AMP).

Who are we going to listen to? If we are smart, we will listen to Jesus and embrace the fullness of what the Father has destined and provided for us.

Relationship sets us free and empowers us. Religion makes slaves out of us. The truth is that we serve God not so that we can have a relationship with Him but because we already have a relationship with Him in Christ. We serve from the security of our relationship with Him, so we are co-heirs with Him. We work with Him not for Him. If we are working for God then we will be looking to get something in return. But if we're working with God, we're working in partnership with Him and simply enjoying all the blessings that brings.

Too often people base their identities on what they do, on anything from their jobs to their roles in relationships and their pursuits, and by doing so they significantly limit their lives. The truth is God intends for all people to find their identity in Christ. That is where we will find the truth of who we are and embrace it.

Where do we get our identity from? From what we do? From our work? How do you introduce yourself? I'm a doctor, I'm a housewife, I'm a cleaner... If your identity is so tied up with what you do that you cannot separate it, then what you do has power over you.

Some of us will get our identity from relationships, with a father, mother or husband, wife, friend... Those relationships can define us. People join clubs – or even gangs – because they are looking for identity. They are looking to belong. Whereas, in God, we already belong.

As a Christian, your identity encompasses all the abundance of being a beloved child of God. It encompasses the abundance, the overflow... everything it means to be a child of God. But our spirit has to grow and overrule the soul. It must overrule everything that has told us in the past who we are, everything that has naturally defined us, so that our spirit decrees who we are, based on what God says. Then we can live in the truth of that identity and revelation of who we truly are and why we are here, and we can start living our lives fully in Christ.

You are saved from punishment; you are reconciled to God; you are accepted as a child of God; you are adopted into His family. You are a saint not a sinner; you're blessed; you have a new spiritual identity as a son and an heir. Believe it. Start thinking that way, start meditating on that. Start embracing what God says about you!

By virtue of our adoption we have been given a new name, as a son not a slave, a new legal standing and status. Accepted; no longer alienated nor condemned. A new family relationship: God is our Father, no longer our Judge. A new image: the image of Christ, these are awesome things that God has done for us.

Knowing your identity is absolutely key to knowing and fulfilling your destiny. Because if you don't *experientially* know who you are (that means actually know it by experience, not just know about it),



then how can you know what belongs to you and what you are called to do? See, if you were the son of the Queen of England but you were taken as a baby and put into another family, you would never know who you really were. And we have been robbed, we were taken into captivity, so (even though we have now been released) we have never known the fullness of who we really are.

But God is revealing to us in these days who we really are as His children; what sons really do in the kingdom of God; and what our inheritance really is in that kingdom.

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