DAY 23

GALATIANS 4:4–7

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

When I was growing up, we had school meals where we sat down at tables together and we ate the food that was presented to us. We had no choice in what food was served that day. We might like it, we might not like it; it might be well cooked, it might be badly cooked. We had no choice in the matter. My least liked day was sauerkraut day. If you've never had sauerkraut—it's a bitter form of cabbage. Some people love it. I find it hard to even put it in my mouth. But, if it was sauerkraut day at school, it was sauerkraut day.

Turning to today's passage: The book of Galatians challenges its readers, including you and me, to live a life that is rooted solely in faith in Jesus Christ. A life in which other forms of "living right" are given up in favor of one great approach: trusting in Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, the reality of a life apart from grace and faith is compared to living like a child with a guardian—limited. The inheritance may, in theory, be yours, but you can't get to it. It's a gray, constrained world.

But now, bursting forth in glorious color is one of the most amazing consequenc-

es of faith in Jesus Christ. We aren't simply forgiven—after all, Jesus' death on the cross could have changed us from unforgiven slaves to forgiven slaves. No! Jesus was sent so that, by faith in Him, we might become the chosen children of God the Father.

The passage is really very bold here. We were constrained and unable to actually live right but now we are God's children. And not just His children, but His adopted children. Compare my school dining experience—you get what you're served—with going to a restaurant. You've chosen the restaurant. You're given the menu. You select food, maybe even multiple courses, from the menu. And, being wise, you choose exactly what you want. The tastes, the flavors—everything that you love and want to eat. You know how good that perfectly cooked dream meal is, and you choose it.

The word "adoption" is one of the most profound points in this passage: Knowing exactly who we were, and exactly who we are today, God chooses to adopt us. In other terms, you weren't just a no-option meal plonked in front of God. No! God had an option, and he willingly chose to adopt you. Yes—you. He looked at the whole of humanity and chose you to welcome home as a child. Not a forgiven slave, but a wanted, chosen, delighted in, loved child. Wow! Let that truth sink into you for a moment.

REFLECT

Consider the significance that, as a Christian, you haven't "just" been forgiven by Jesus' death on the cross, amazing as that is. You are a chosen child of the living God. How does this impact your gratitude to God? How might this transform how you worship, and how you love others this Christmas?

PRAY

Heavenly Father, thank you that when I chose to trust Jesus for forgiveness, you chose to adopt me as your child. Help me to know more how deeply loved I am and help me to live in that reality and the security that it brings. Give me the courage and awareness to love everyone I meet as someone who you value as a child, even if they haven't turned to you yet, just as Jesus did in coming to earth. Amen.