

My experience on the Normandy beaches reminded me of how fortunate I am. On those beaches and throughout Europe and the world, various men and women of multiple nationalities gave their lives so I might enjoy the freedoms from which I benefit today. Undeniably I am a most fortunate heir to a great fortune.

My experience in France also reminded me of how fortunate I am in the spiritual realm, which, when all is said and done, is the realm that counts. It occurred in Paris at The Sainte-Chapelle, which depicts, in the unmatched artistry of stained glass, the story of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Obviously, hitting only the high points of God’s redemptive story of love, these panes of glass from the 13th century, moved me in a moment of spiritual elation as I gave thanks for the promise of God to redeem all who would place their faith in Christ. How fortunate I was to be able to stand there and take it all in, absorbing the reality of God’s love past, present, and future. I tell you I was, in that moment, most fortunate. And I tell you in this moment that I am still most fortunate for I am an heir to a great fortune.

Father’s Day provides us an opportunity to reflect on fatherhood as well as motherhood, family, and relationships. There is a need for fathers in the church to take seriously their charge to father in the power of the Father who is revealed in Jesus Christ. All fathers are fortunate to be blessed with children made in the image of God, bearing His likeness.

As we reflect on this Father’s Day, each of us, who is a believer in Christ, is blessed as fortunate heirs to a great fortune. As great a fortune as I have in my children, Emily and Nicholas, I possess an even greater fortune to which I am a fortunate heir. I know that sounds harsh, but it is absolutely true. I give thanks to God for my children and for my wife. What a fortunate man I am! I pray you see your children and spouse the same as I see mine: as great fortunes. I want to encourage you to offer thanksgiving to your Heavenly Father for gifts most precious – the gift of your children, if you have children, and the gift of your spouse, if you have a spouse.

More importantly, though, we are to offer thanksgiving for the gift of being fortunate heirs to a great fortune – even greater than children and spouses and family. Just as Normandy’s beaches and Sainte Chapelle in Paris reminded me of my fortune, so this room and more significantly, all of you gathered in this room, Jackie, Emily, and Nicholas included, remind me that if we are in Christ, then all of us are fortunate heirs to a great fortune. This is precisely what the text I offered from Galatians 3:23-4:7 articulates.

In a nutshell the New Testament book of Galatians, which has been called “The Magna Charta of the Christian Faith”, is a declaration that if we are in Jesus Christ, if we are believers, then each one of us is a “Some-Body.” It makes no difference what one’s social or economic status in life may be, what one’s nationality is, or what one’s gender is. Faith in Jesus Christ makes a person a child of God. As such one is a descendant of Abraham and Sarah, because Christ is descended from them. Together we are heirs to a great fortune.

This great fortune comes by faith in Christ. As fortunate heirs we give ourselves to Christ unconditionally and obediently in faith. There is nothing I can do except have faith. Have you ever considered “having faith”? Having faith is no small task. It may be more challenging than keeping all the law of the Old Testament, maintaining a list of “dos and don’ts”, or even working through the latest study course. In one of my former pastorates, a young woman simply couldn’t get this whole idea of being justified by faith. She told me, “I have gone through ‘Experiencing God,’ ‘The Mind of Christ,’ ‘PrayerLife,’ and ‘Revival Walk.’ I pray five times each day and have committed vast portions of scripture to memory. I believe all of this puts me right with God.” I asked her where faith fit into her scheme. She said, “What does faith have to do with it?”

There are many sincere folk out there who are so misguided when it comes to the basis of being heirs to a great fortune. Going through all the workbooks, reading through the Bible, outdoing another believer in the “dos and don’ts”, praying on the street corner without ceasing for all to see, or surpassing another church statistically is all too easy. But allowing our lives to be justified by faith, that is a whole other matter. It is through faith that we are children of God – not the latest study curriculum or acts of devoted piety, as good and helpful as all those are. So to my former parishioner I humbly said, “Why faith has everything to do with it.”

And it does. For without being justified by faith, we are a most unfortunate people. How so? For one we never have the joy of knowing and appreciating the rich diversity that exists in the church worldwide, let alone right here in Tabernacle. We are all different. Some are male. Some are female. Some are Jew. Some are Gentile. Some are slave. Some are free. Some are wealthy. Some aren’t. Some have a deep intellect. Some don’t. Some are employees. Some are employers. Some are white. Some are black. Some are Hispanic. Some are American. Some are Oriental. On and on I could go. There are human distinctions, yes; but in Christ, in Jesus Christ the Crucified and Resurrected Son of God, there aren’t any. Not a single one. Paul says we are all “*one in Christ Jesus*” (v. 28). There is no distinction. We are all one.

All of this is possible because “*when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children*”(vv. 4-5). There is no distinction. We are all one. For this we are most fortunate.

I was able to watch the replay of President Reagan’s burial at the Reagan Library in Simi Valley, California last Saturday morning on C-SPAN. Each of his children made some observations about his life. Patti, Ron, and Michael all outdid themselves. I was most moved by what Michael had to say. He pointed out in his remarks that he was adopted. He wasn’t Ronald Reagan’s flesh and blood son. Michael said, however, that his dad was just that. His dad. Reagan never treated him any differently. He never saw Michael as his “adopted” child. He was his son. He, like the other children, was an heir to a great fortune.

All of us are adopted, aren’t we? You and I are the adopted children of God. On this Father’s Day, I am most fortunate that even though I am adopted, I am embraced as a flesh and blood child of God. I am His offspring. More importantly, I am a “spiritual child of His.” I am, certainly, a most fortunate heir to a great fortune! And that fortune is none other than a life with God right now and forever. It is also a life with you and every believer on this planet. How fortunate I am to be heir of a great fortune. So, how fortunate are you?

**Sermon by Dr. Jimmy Gentry, Pastor
Tabernacle Baptist Church
Carrollton, Georgia**

All scriptures, unless otherwise noted, are from the New Revised Standard Version, 1989.