
Gospel Driven Sonship

1. Search for significance via Social Media

- It's interesting when you look at the phenomena of social media
 - Not just how many people use Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc ... 1.59 billion
 - But HOW they use Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- What it reveals is there's often a deep craving for personal significance and approval that people are seeking through what they post
 - Check in at airport
 - Selfie's in front of bathroom mirror
 - Meal they're eating at a restaurant
 - Flattering photo
- We post it and then go back to see how many ppl who have liked it and what comments they've made
- What's going on there?
- Deep down what we're doing is seeking significance and approval of others ... and we measure it by the number of likes, thumbs up, love hearts, comments we receive
 - I'm not pointing fingers at anyone because I've done it myself
 - Well I haven't done selfies in front of the mirror ... but hey last week we went to Madam Tausad's and I posted a selfie
- I remember a few years ago I posted on FB what I had done that day
 - "Great day! Breakfast meeting, sermon prep, scripture, Bible study ..."
 - I know why I did it
 - I wanted people to think I was working hard, being a good minister
 - I wanted validate my significance
- Article last year in The Guardian¹
- Essena O'Neill, an Australian teenager with more than half a million followers on Instagram, made headlines after announcing that she was quitting Instagram because it is "contrived perfection made to get attention".
 - "I remember I obsessively checked the like count for a full week since uploading it," she wrote of her first-ever post on Instagram, a selfie that now has close to 2,500 likes. "It got 5 likes. This was when I was so hungry for social media validation ..."

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/nov/04/instagram-young-women-self-esteem-essena-oneill>

- Another young lady, Michelle Linker, said she get serious Fomo (fear of missing out) with Instagram, and with all social media.
 - “I’m 24, I’m a young professional in Toronto, I do feel a pressure to look particularly good. I would never post a photo that wasn’t flattering of me.”
 - “I feel anxiety over how many likes I get after I post a picture. If I get two likes, I feel like, what’s wrong with me?”

- You might say ...
 - “I don’t use social media, I don’t use Instagram or FB like that”
- Others probably saying
 - “I’ve got no idea what you’ve been talking about for the last 5 mins! What is this Face-agram and Insta-book anyway?”

- Fine ... but social media is just one way we seek significance, approval and value in our lives ... and for you it maybe something else
- Maybe it’s your
 - Work
 - Being perfect parent
 - Lifestyle
 - School grades
 - Looks
 - Sporting achievements
- If I achieve X ... then I feel good about myself > I have value > my life is meaningful > I’m significant

- What Essena O’Neill discovered is that seeking significance, approval and value from other things or other people doesn’t work
- In the end
 - you become a slave to that thing
 - you’re never truly satisfied
 - you’re never really fulfilled

- I want to suggest you never will find it without God
- This morning I want to show you how that can be true for you if you’re not a Christian ... and how it is true for you already if you are a Christian

- This morning ... three things
 - Status as sons

- Privilege as sons
- Experience as sons

2. Context

- Paul ramming home to the Galatians that salvation comes by faith in Christ alone
 - Galatians have been bewitched
 - They've been foolish in listening to false teachers and have been persuaded that you need more than the death and resurrection of Jesus
 - And that you need to add to Christ ... your good works > your moralism, your religiosity
- Issue for Galatians is they were being told they not only had the trust in Jesus but they also had to obey all the OT ceremonial laws
 - Circumcision, food and cleanliness laws, special days etc
- Paul argued in Ch 3 that the Law was never the means of being made right with God, and could never be the means of being right with God
 - Salvation by faith was always the way ... right from Abraham ... and centuries before God gave the Law to Moses and the Israelites
- Having established that we are saved by faith and not by our moral or religious obedience ... Paul goes on to spell out what are the implications of being saved by faith
- In 3:26 ... those who live by faith are sons of God

3. Status as sons (v28-29)

- Now some people take offence at being called 'sons' of God
 - Why not say 'children of God' or 'sons and daughters' of God
 - "Isn't this just another example of the sexist, chauvinistic worldview of the Bible"
- But if we are too quick to adjust the biblical language we miss the essence of what text is saying and we'll see its actually very inclusive
 - You see in that culture daughters could not inherit property
 - It would always go to the oldest son
 - Therefore it was impossible for a daughter to be an heir
 - Really only in the last 100 years that this has changed for women
 - You only have to watch *Pride and Prejudice* to know all about that

- But what Paul is saying here is radically different
 - He's saying we are ALL sons of God in Christ
 - Men and woman are ALL heirs because they are all sons of God
- Now when Paul tells the Galatians they are sons of God, he's not saying that everyone has this status in some generic way by virtue of being created by him
- The status of sonship comes through **faith** in Christ Jesus

- In case you're wondering what it means to have faith in Christ ... Paul gives us a clue in v27
- First you were baptised
 - They made a public profession of where your allegiance lies
 - Nailed your colours to the mast in terms of who is Lord of your life

- Secondly, Paul says they have "clothed themselves with Christ"
- Here he likens Jesus himself to a garment
- This idea of clothing ourselves with Christ implies
- Firstly, Christ is our primary identity
 - Our clothing tells people who we are
 - Nearly every kind of clothing is actually a uniform showing that we identify with a particular gender, social class, or race
 - But to clothe ourselves with Christ is to say that our ultimate identity is found, not in gender, class or race ... but in Jesus

- Secondly, it implies that we imitate Christ
 - Your clothes are what you present to the outside world
 - Clothing yourself with Christ is to imitate Christ in the way we live
 - It's to put on and imitate his virtues, his worldview, his desires, his actions

- To emphasise his point that 'all' are sons of God ... Paul goes on in v28 to say it doesn't matter who you are
 - A persons status as a son of God doesn't depend on culture, social class, or gender
 - v28 – *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
 - It makes absolutely no difference who you are, where you are from, what job you do, what chromosome you're born with
 - ALL are equal in the eyes of God when it comes to being sons of God

4. Privilege as sons (3:29-4:5)

- Having established all are sons of God through faith in Jesus, Paul then shows the Galatians the privilege they have as sons

- His point is if you are a son ... that makes you an heir
- And to make the point using an illustration of a young child who is the heir of a great estate
 - When he's a minor he is 'no different from a slave" (4:1) since "he is subject to guardians and trustees" (v2)
 - But when he comes of age, he comes into his inheritance with all the privileges and security that comes with it

- Illustration – Prince George
- Prince George is an heir to the throne of in House of Windsor
 - At the moment he is still a child
 - But when he grows up and the time comes for him to become king ... not only will he become the King of Britain but also of 16 other countries around the world
 - Own more than 300 residences, including castles or palaces like Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Kensington Palace, St James Palace, Holyrood House in Edinburgh, Balmoral Castle in Scotland and Sandringham in Norfolk
 - 1200 staff
 - Annual grants & income of approx GBP 50mil (\$95m AUD)
 - Doesn't include any private assets that get passed on from the Queen & Prince Charles etc

- That's a massive inheritance isn't it
 - As an heir to that inheritance ... George will
 - never have to concern himself with having enough money > he will have more riches than he could dream to spend
 - no question around his identity > he will be one of the most popular, adored and recognised men in the world
 - never have any uncertainty about his future > future is secure > staff, palaces, money
 - Nothing to worry about

- But when you become a son of God ... you become heir of an inheritance infinitely greater than Prince George will receive

- You are guaranteed an inheritance not just from the King of England ... but the King of the universe
- That means
 - You have nothing to worry about
 - Your Father in heaven owns the place!
- With that amazing status as sons of God ... it means you have no need to seek identity or fulfilment in other things like
 - Career, family, relationships, possessions, sexuality
 - In Christ you are a son of God!
 - What more could you want
 - Your eternal future is secure
 - Your identity is assured
 - You have all the riches of eternity!
- But as incredible as that inheritance is ... there is something else that is just as incredible about this inheritance received by those who are sons of God
- And that is this ... we receive this inheritance as **ADOPTED** sons of God
 - v5 *"Chris came to redeem those under law, that we might receive the **full rights of sons.**"*
 - One word in the original language = adoption of children
 - the emphasis is on the full enjoyment of the privileges of legal heirs
 - Other translations translate that phrase 'adoption as sons'
- What the translations are trying to capture is that we are **only** sons of God by **adoption**
 - That is ... we're not by nature sons of God
 - Only Christ is the true son of God
 - Yet ... when you come to faith in Jesus and clothe yourself in him ... you share in the inheritance that is set apart for Christ
 - God adopts you into his family ...
 - You don't deserve it > you haven't earned it > you have no right to it
 - YET ... by faith in Christ, God brings you in ... and makes you son, and because you are a son, you are also an heir
 - As such you have the all the privileges that come with being a legal heir of the Father in heaven
- Illustration - Adoption
 - Imagine you or I were adopted by the Queen

- None of us have anything to credit being bought into her family
- No money, social status, success, good looks, royal lineage
- Absolutely nothing
- But once adopted ... Queen writes you into her will alongside Charles, Andrew, Edward and Anne (legitimate children) to get an equal share of her estate
- Incredible!
- That is exactly what God has done for us ... except our inheritance is infinitely greater and eternal

- **Application**
- When I first became a Christian I used to think of my salvation primarily in negative terms
 - That is ... I knew I was a sinner who wasn't living a good life that honoured God > and that made me liable to face God's judgment
 - I was grateful that Jesus had died for me to rescue me from sin and judgment
 - That my guilt and sin had been taken off me through Christ's death

- But I didn't understand that at the very same time ... this legal transaction had taken place that meant I was now a son of God and that there are huge blessings and privileges that come with being a son
 - That not only is something taken off me ... but something wonderful is put on me
 - I'm not only pardoned ... but I have this new legal status ... I'm a son of God

- But Paul wants to remind the Galatians and us that not only did Christ remove the curse we deserved, but he also gives us the blessing we don't deserve
 - And yet this blessing is just as secure and guaranteed as our pardon

- Unless you know and remember this, you will be anxious and even despairing when you sin or fail
 - You'll think Jesus has wiped your slate clean ... but now it's up to you to write good deeds on it so God will love and accept you
- But your slate **has** been wiped clean AND Jesus has written his righteousness onto it
 - You inheritance is not a prize to be won ... but a gift that has been given

5. Experience as Sons

- In v6, Paul tells us that our status as sons of God is not just an objective thing made possible through Christ
 - But is also a subjective thing that we are able to experience
 - How?
 - Through the Spirit

- In the same way that God sent the Son into our world ... in v6 we see that God also sent the Spirit into our hearts
- The Son is sent to redeem > Why? so we might receive sonship
- But the Spirit is sent to call out
 - Result is not just a **legal status** of sonship that we receive in Christ ... but an **actual experience** of sonship that we receive through the Spirit

- The **Son** goes to secure something **objective** > to confer a new legal status
- **HS** goes to secure us something **subjective** > to feel the **reality** of our status

- Illustration - Prodigal Son
 - Prodigal son > demands his share of inheritance > goes off > spends it all > destitute and desperate > realises he needs to go back to the Father
 - Goes back knowing he is not worthy > he doesn't believe he is worthy to be forgiven and restored as a son > he just wants to live on the farm and be like one of his father's workers
 - Yet the Father sees him and comes running out to him
 - Before he can blurt out his prepared speech the father threw his arms around him and kisses him
 - He welcomes him home as a son
 - He gets an experience of the Father's love for him
 - And the father kissing the son in Luke 15 is a metaphor for the work of the HS in assuring us of God's love
- HS helps to assure you ... your sonship is real > your sins **are** forgiven and you belong to the Lord
 - Our tendency is to want to prove ourselves worthy of God's love
 - Even though we may know we are saved by grace through faith in Christ ... we still feel it's necessary to do good, be moral, be religious so that God will accept us

- **Application**

- Why are we comparing ourselves to others all the time?
 - Why are we constantly trying to prove ourselves to the world by what we post on FB?
 - Why are we jealous about others house, car, holidays, money, looks?
 - Why are we searching for significance, approval and value in these things?
- Because we struggle to remember that in Christ you are an adopted son of God with all the privileges that come with an eternal inheritance that FAR outweigh all those things
 - You might believe it in your head ... but when you're jealous, and proving yourself and seeking significance in other things and comparing yourself to others ... it shows you might know it in your head ... but you're not yet believing it in your heart
 - You're not experiencing the reality of it
 - What Paul is saying here is God sends the HS to help you experience the **reality** of adoption in your heart ... and not just know the **status** of adoption in your head
- **Illustration - Father & Son on road**
 - Imagine a father and son walking along road, hand in hand
 - Father stops, picks him up, embraces him and kisses him
 - The son's status is no different to before ... but his experience is vastly different
 - So your status as a son of God, redeemed from sin and death, guaranteed the inheritance of all the riches and glory of heaven and eternal life ... it may be something you can know intellectually ... but the Spirit helps us know it is true existentially
 - What it's like? What is this experience?
 - Firstly the Spirit calls out > cries out!
 - He helps us cry out to God
 - To speak to him, to pray to him
 - The Spirit assures you of your relationship with him ... so much so .. that you feel free to speak to the creator of the universe in a very personal and intimate way

- Secondly, the Spirit leads us to call God "Abba, Father"
 - Not the Swedish pop group from 70's!
 - Abba is the Aramaic word for Father
 - Very **intimate** way of addressing God > like we might say Daddy / Papa
 - Same way Jesus cried out to the Father when he was praying in the garden before his arrest
 - Expresses a very intimate and personal relationship we have with God as his sons

- So the indwelling of the HS equips you and enables you to cry out 'Abba, Father' which assures you, you **are** a son of God, with all the privileges, blessings, inheritance and intimacy of that come with that status

- **Illustration – Wreck of Time**
- A number of years ago Annie Dillard wrote an article called The Wreck of Time
- Her point is when you look at history ... we are so, so insignificant in this world ...
 - "What were you doing On April 30, 1991 when 138,000 people drowned? [in Bangladesh] Where were you when you first heard the astounding, heart-breaking news? Who told you? What were your sensations? Did you weep? Did your anguish last days or weeks?"
- She goes on to say
 - "A single death is a tragedy, a million is a statistic." Joseph Stalin, that connoisseur, gave words to this disquieting and possibly universal sentiment."
 - "Who and of what import were the men whose bones bulk the Great Wall, the 30 million Mao starved, or the 11 million children under five who die each year now? Why, they are the insignificant others, of course; living or dead, they are just some of the plentiful others. And you? "
- Are you any different? How could you be?
 - "We who breathe air now will join the already dead layers of us who breathed air once. We arise from dirt and dwindle to dirt, and the might of the universe is arrayed against us."

- Here's what Annie Dillard is saying ...
 - You & I are absolutely insignificant ... unless there is a God
 - You are just the one of the 85 billion people who have ever lived on this planet

- 138,000 people die in a flood in Bangladesh ... and do you and I weep
 - No ... of course not!
 - They're insignificant to us
- 11 million children under five every year ... and we might feel bad / guilty for a while
- But how long are you going to feel bad for?
- In the history of humanity they're insignificant and so are you and so am I ... unless there is a God

- You can try and do something about it and create some form of significance for yourself
- You can try and do it through
 - your social media profile
 - career
 - relationships
 - accumulating your wealth
- But you know in your heart that will never truly be satisfied and you know it will never last
 - I'm mean who is going to remember you in 100 years?
 - No one!

- Or ... you can know that God thought you were so significant he would send his son, give him up to the cross rather than lose you ... and then send his HS to help you know this and be assured of this

- When you know the objective truth that Christ came to redeem you so that you can be a **Son of God!** ...
- And you experience the subjective reality of the Spirit coming into your heart to assure you of your status as a son
 - Then you won't be defensive
 - You won't be driven by the approval of others
 - You won't be seeking significance and worth in your life through other things or other people
 - You won't be upset by criticism
 - You won't be obsessive
 - You won't be anxious
 - You won't always be punishing yourself when you fail
- Why ... because you are a Son of God
 - Adopted by grace ...
 - You didn't deserve it

- But Christ has redeemed you ... so that you might become an heir through faith in Jesus Christ
 - And because you're an heir ... you're guaranteed an eternal inheritance that is infinitely greater and significant than anything you could ever imagine
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- Will you put your faith in him?
 - Will you trust that Christ has already done this for you at the cross?
 - Will you take confidence in the work of the Spirit who allows you to cry out to your Father in heaven - Abba Father
 - Will you find comfort that all the significance, approval and value you need has been overwhelmingly demonstrated to you by God adopting you as his son and making you an heir of eternity?

PRAY