

Series: Galatians	Reference: Galatians 4:1-7	Title: Adoption to Sonship	Date: 05.07.23
Website Writeup:			
God has brought us into His household. Adopted as sons & daughters, everything is okay between us now due to Christ's death & resurrection! The question is, do we live our daily lives as if that's true?			

Color Changes in text indicate slide changes

Interesting things happen when people aren't on the same page. For instance, one day a woman bought cookies while waiting for her flight, then sat down at a table to read her newspaper, but not long she heard rustling. Peeking over her paper, she was shocked to see a well-dressed man sitting opposite her, helping himself to her cookies. Half-angry, half-embarrassed, she reached over, gently slid the package closer to herself, took one out, ate it, then went back to reading her newspaper.

Not long...more rustling! He'd taken another cookie leaving only one in the package! She was flabbergasted; but not wanting to make a scene, she said nothing. Finally, to add insult to injury, the man broke the last cookie in half, pushed one piece toward her & ate the other, then left without a word. She was dumbfounded. Some time later, as her flight was announced, she opened her handbag to get her tickets only to find her unopened cookies. Somewhere in that airport some guy was trying to figure out how that strange woman could've been so rude. They were *not* on the same page.

In the first-century, Judaizers had invented their own edition of the gospel by combining grace & legalism. Spiritual chaos ensued since they weren't on the same page with God. By combining grace with Old Testament law, the Judaizers were producing a dangerous hybrid of Christianity which was really no gospel at all.

Therefore, in chapter 3, Paul reminds the Galatians of Christ's sacrificial death for them, asks how they got the Spirit, and shows how God's plan had always been by faith. In chapter 4, Paul teaches us how grace is superior to the law.¹

In the classic novel *Ben-Hur*, Lew Wallace tells the tale of a rich Jewish merchant who ends up a prisoner on a Roman slave ship. While on the ship, Judah Ben-Hur saves the ship's captain, Arrius, a very powerful Roman. The scene & what follows are an illustration of what it meant within a Roman culture to adopt someone. Arrius gives Ben-Hur his ring & tells him, "Show my ring to my freedman, who hath control in my absence; you will find him in a villa near Misenum. Ask anything, or all he may have; and he will not refuse the demand. If I live, I will do thee better."² Paul says, that's the relationship we have with God in Christ now.

¹ Max Anders, [Galatians-Colossians](#), vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 49.

² Lew Wallace, *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* [New York: Harper Brothers, 1880], 167

Open your pew Bibles to Galatians 4:1-7 on p796 to read some wonderful words penned by Paul 2000 years ago under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Words as relevant today as when they were first written to the Galatians.

It says....What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. ²The heir is subject to guardians & trustees until the time set by his father. ³So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. ⁴But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. ⁶Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Let's first focus our attention on vv4 & 5. We may miss it if we read too quickly. *But when the set time had fully come | God sent his Son | born of a woman | born under the law | to redeem those under the law | that we might receive adoption to sonship.*

Let's take this a phrase at a time... 'But when the time had fully come' suggests that other things had to happen before Jesus came. Some suggest conditions were ripe for the spread of the gospel. The Romans had ushered in an era of relative peace through law & order. Their network of roads made travel more convenient. Widespread use of the Greek language simplified communication. At the same time, the proliferation of empty religions among many people created a spiritual hunger for something genuine.³

And we've seen, God had to communicate certain things, the Promise to Abraham being one, the giving of the Law another - time had pass for the Law as guardian to teach people their need of a savior. God had to build His people & teach them first. God works in history because we are governed by time - sin had polluted our thinking so much that we have to hear it 10k times to have it sink in! Humanity, viewed as whole, is like a growing child who in their adolescent & teen years rebel against their father until they're old enough to say, "Maybe Dad was right!" We need time in some sense to do life ourselves to find out that doesn't work, that we need our Creator!

This sentiment is repeated consistently. Jesus said in Mk 1:15... "*The time has come,*" he said. "*The kingdom of God has come near. Repent & believe the good news!*" Romans 5:6...*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.* Ephesians 1:8-10 says Christ's work was...¹⁰ *to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment - to bring unity to all things in heaven & on earth under Christ.*

For many reasons the time was right, at which 'God sent his Son.' Jesus often used the term Son of Man to reference Himself; a messianic title used to express his heavenly

³ Max Anders, [Galatians-Colossians](#), vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 50.

origin, earthly mission & glorious future coming. A term which reflects more His heavenly origin, divinity, the mystery of His manifestation in human form, and on His earthly mission which involved suffering & death which issued in heavenly glory to be followed by final vindication...

...The specific source of the term is Daniel 7:13-14 which says...*“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days & was led into his presence. ¹⁴ He was given authority, glory & sovereign power; all nations & peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.* A picture which is revealed in Revelation 5, 7 & 9 as all the nations worship Jesus at the end of time.

Jesus repeatedly quoted parts of Daniel 7 in teaching about His second coming (Mt 16:27; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31; 26:64). A prophetic portrayal of His own person: His incarnation, ascension & inheritance of the kingdom of God.⁴ So, ‘God sent His Son’ speaks of the divinity of Jesus.

Then we have, ‘born of a woman’ recalling the Virgin Birth, and John 1:14 which says... *The Word became flesh & made his dwelling among us.* If the Son of Man speaks of His divine origin, this speaks of Him being fully man. Only God can break sin’s curse, but a perfect human life was required - the second Adam undoing the first Adam’s fall. A human ‘born under the law’ like the rest of us, but one who exhibited perfection in the face of the law.

Hebrews 2:10-11 can only be true if Christ was fully human as well as fully God when it says...*In bringing many sons & daughters to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom & through whom everything exists, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through what he suffered. ¹¹Both the one who makes people holy & those who are made holy **are of the same family.** So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers & sisters.*

The result of His work is comprehensive to those who believe, ‘to redeem those under the law’. Just like the sin of Adam was comprehensive in its effect, so is the perfection of Christ comprehensive in its healing when received by faith! But not just free & left to our own devices, but *that we might receive adoption to sonship!* Reunited with a heavenly father as children brought into His household. Adopted as sons & daughters, everything is okay between us now due to Christ’s death & resurrection! People with place & purpose!

The question is, do we live our daily lives as if the Gospel’s true? After showing how our failure to obey the law points us to Jesus, Paul moves on to speak seriously of this adoption. Redeemed is a legal term related to slavery. The slave was set free by someone paying the slave owner full price for the slave. **“Here, the slave master is the law. Jesus**

⁴ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, [“Son of Man.”](#) in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1983.

pays our full price to the law. He completely fulfills all the law's demands on us. And so He is able to free us from it."⁵ But, if we are set free, where do we go?

Kim & I visited a plantation outside Charleston, SC. A sprawling beautiful place set on a river made rich by the production of Carolina Gold, once the most popular rice grown in America, and the first commercial rice the country ever produced & exported across the world. Named due to its gold color, it was worth more than gold to plantation owners.

In 1820, approximately 100,000 acres of it was growing throughout the South forging the plantation culture of the tidewater areas of South Carolina, Georgia & North Carolina, fueling cuisine & economies. The ugly side was that the great wealth it produced was built on the tortured backs of slaves. The success of Carolina Gold only made things worse, increasing demand for slaves from western Africa's Rice Coast, who knew better than anyone how to plant & harvest it.

It thrived as America's primary rice crop up until the Civil War, when hurricanes & the end of slavery destroyed many of South Carolina's rice crops. Invading soldiers waited until the brackish water which flowed upriver at high tide to flood all the fields with salt water by opening the irrigation doors rendering them unproductive for 7+ years to help make sure plantations were shut down.

Imagine you'd been brought to this country in a slave ship. Bought & sold like a farm animal, placed on that plantation working for 3 decades growing Carolina Gold, until suddenly, you're freed. You have paper in hand, but this plantation is all you've known, cultivating rice is all you're skilled in & that's destroyed. What do you do? Where do you go? You probably have no money. You're free, released into a hostile world which has never seen you as anything but a slave. How would you survive? Freedom must've been frightening, just like Israel wanting to go back to Egypt - I imagine some said they at least knew where their home & meal were coming from on the plantation.

Now imagine, before the fall of slavery the wealthiest man in America rolled in. A former slave who'd lived so well before his captors they had to free him. He's there to buy up every slave on the plantation at great cost to himself to give them freedom. Then stood before them offering his mansion to live in, legally adopted as his own children with full access to family wealth & benefits. He'd teach them new skills, and care for them in all ways. Some jump at the chance, others are skeptical & decide to take their chances in a harsh world alone.

That's the gospel. We're not just freed, our account isn't just zero'd out, but flooded with unlimited funds! The gospel brings us into a home with a loving father. Some believe & receive. Some don't & leave. With freedom in Christ we're not just released without knowing what to do, or where to go! We have place & purpose. Taken in by the Creator, adopted into His household. Made a child through faith in the work of Christ. The slaves been freed, the orphan's been adopted, the lost's been found!

⁵ Tim Keller, *Galatians for You* [Purcellville, VA: The Good Book Company, 2013], 98

Remember Jesus said in John 14:18-21...*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹Whoever has my commands & keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them & show myself to them.*"

What are His commands? Remember when Jesus was asked in John 6, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" He answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." Just believe, entering a new life of loving God & others.

Ephesians 1:4-6 says...*For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy & blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us for **adoption to sonship** through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure & will - ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.*

This is all throughout Scripture, it's all been arranged for us. Like we're waking up from spiritual amnesia, our eyes focusing in on the face of Christ & it's finally dawning on us how we'd been kidnapped, sold into slavery & kept prisoner for years, but Jesus paid the captors price. We're God's children waking from slumber to a new & beautiful life free from fear & accusation!

Romans 8:15-16...*The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*

Abba, the Aramaic word Paul uses here & in Galatians 4, is a term of endearment used to refer to our new, loving relationship with God. Not a distant God for whom we need to follow rules to stay in His presence; He reveals Himself as a loving Father whom we can approach without fear. Abba "signifies a confidence of love & assurance of welcome. Just as a young child simply assumes that a parent loves them, is there for them & never doubts the security of daddy's strong arms, so Christians can have an overwhelming boldness & certainty that God loves them endlessly."⁶

As if God's love & security weren't enough, there are additional rights & privileges which come with being a child of God. As Arrius explained to his newly adopted son Ben-Hur, Judah could ask anything from the household of Arrius in his name, and no one would refuse. Ben-Hur, an outsider: from a different country, ethnicity & political class, a prisoner serving a life sentence suddenly made all-powerful within the Roman world simply by the act of a Roman father saying, "This is my son." Later, Ben-Hur returned home & even his enemies could do nothing against him, it's as though he's been born again - an entirely new person. In just a few lines, Paul draws on an illustration the

⁶ Tim Keller, *Galatians for You*, 100

gentiles & Jews of his day would've understood: in the act of adopting us, God has changed everything about us, just as Arrius changed everything for Ben-Hur.

I will not leave you as orphans...how many believers live like God *has* left them as orphans? He's freed them, yet they act as if they have nowhere to go, and have to go it alone in a harsh world! How many of us live as orphans, when we have a loving Dad who's adopted us into His home & tells us, "Ask me anything; you're my child"? Are you living this new life of faith as a child of God - or as an orphan?

Rose Marie Miller, wife of Jack Miller, the author of the Sonship course, was not at one point in her journey & said this about that time..."The gospel was not *my* working theology: Mine was moralism & legalism - a religion of duty & self control through human willpower. The goal was self-justification, not the justification by faith in Christ the gospel offers. But, as many people can tell you, moralism & legalism can pass for Christianity, at least outwardly, in the good times. It's only when crises come that you find there's no foundation on which to stand. And crises are what God used to reveal my heart's true need for him."⁷ Before this realization, her husband would often say to her..."you act as if you are an orphan, as if there's no Father who loves you."

Orphans have to take care of themselves, be strong, protect themselves from being taken advantage of, can't depend on anyone, or show weakness. They crave to be taken in & loved, but doubt they ever will. To be accepted & belong, but can't accept the offer when given it. Orphans trust themselves, can't get too close & are on the outside looking in.

But a Son/Daughter relies on their position with a loving father in all things. They're willing to accept & *receive the promised eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15)*. *They find Hebrews 10:19-23 to be true which speaks of our confidence in Christ...Therefore, brothers & sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new & living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart & with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience & having our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.*

If we're sons & daughters in Christ, we enjoy the love & protection of a perfect Father. Not an impatient, stingy parent forever irritated at weakness & failure. He invites us into the family, gives us His name, dresses us with the righteousness fitting of His family, and erases the ways of orphanhood, especially self-reliance & self-justification.

But too often we forget who we are & return to orphanhood, we place ourselves back into slavery. We say, "Thanks for paying the price, but I will go it alone in this harsh world, I only trust myself." Living as if it were still up to us, as if the Spirit never came & could never teach or guide us in all affairs of life. We go through the day believing it's up

⁷ *Nothing is Impossible with God*

to us to figure out how to solve problems & get on with life. The result is, we live with an uneasy guilt & fear because we haven't measured up to standards, or won the approval of God & others. We become angry legalists. Or live in quiet licentiousness.

But the Gospel says, we don't have to be perfect because Jesus is perfect for us. When perfection is taken care of - when we're declared righteousness by the blood of Christ - we're free to love, to accept our weaknesses because God's strong in them, and to believe God is for us. We develop a lightness of being & a sense of humor about ourselves. We can more easily bear with others in love, because it's not up to us to control! "Living to please God - repenting of the true guilt which comes when we put anything besides Jesus at the center of our lives, trusting in the blood of Christ to cleanse the conscience of dead works, relying on the power & presence of the Holy Spirit for the tasks of the day is truly the liberated way to live"⁸

⁸ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/no-longer-an-orphan-but-tempted-to-live-like-it>