

Adoption: From Slaves to Sons

Galatians 4:1-7

[word about last week, big passages, topics picking us]

This is a subject that I have talked a lot about over the last few years. I never dreamed I would have written a book on this topic 5 yrs ago; nor did I think we would have 5 kids!

We adopted 5 kids over the last 2 1/2 yrs (Pics of kids). How many of you have adopted? How many of you are adopted?

The question we get is, "Why?" "Do you have a complex?"

Short guy complex? Bald guy? Savior complex? Infertility? Nope. I was asked by a newspaper reporter in Zap? My answer? Jesus.

- **Several things influenced us. We were impacted by (1) Sis' Kids; (2) Scripture (James 1:27), (3) state of orphans: 210 mill; 130,00 in US Foster Care; but **above all, (4) the doctrine of "adoption."** I began to see God as adoptive father. So, as I was preaching at youth camp, urging the camp to do orphan care & I was convicted by my own preaching.**

I repented of my lack of concern, my indifference, and my inactivity.

- **Another way to say it is, "We were motivated by theology not biology."**
 - **The only time I heard about orphan care adoption, was pray for someone, or help an orphanage. But it was never as plan A.**
- **We have a number of people who protest abortion, but I wonder, would you adopt these kids?**

Journey

- **Finally I said, "I want some kids." Haiti or the DR – shortstops. Ukraine**
- **After 18 months, call on a Friday... Tuesday**

- SDA – 4 kids, not 2! **Sams, we get things in bulk.**
- Are we crazy? I called my sis, and then she wrote (**READ Sis' email in Orphanology**)

Then she quoted Mother Teresa to me, **“How can there be too many children? It's like saying there are too many flowers.”**

- We meet – drive- **Holding hands, Laurissa, “you get nothing”**
- James writes a note
- His teacher - **Momma song**
- 11 days later, a court date –, **40 days in country**
- Change names, **Lydia**
- **Mothercare – 600 dollars**
- ‘Forever!’ Changing clothes (**taking off the old, underwear and all**)
- Happy Meals, Train, driver, “no hope” snores..._27 hour trip. **Hattiesburg. Kim's dad, cry liked prom queen.**

After about a year and a half ago, we decided we could handle one more; that's when we began pursuing Eyasu.

God's Adoption of Us

The **greater work of grace** is not our adoption of kids, but God's adoption of us in Christ. **Christ left glory to come to earth** to make us ex-orphans.

Building on his list of terms to describe salvation, he introduces the term “adoption” in ch. 4. He introduces the term “justification” in ch. 2, and “redemption” in ch. 3.

Adoption is related to justification, but is *different, distinct, & additional* to it.

Paul used the word for “adoption” (*huiiothesia*, two words meaning “to place” as a “son”) only **5x in the NT**. These 5 occurrences appear in Paul’s letters to 3 churches of a decidedly Roman background: Gal., Eph., and Rome.

Many of the Roman Emperors were adopted, most famously being Julius Caesar’s adoption of Octavius (Caesar Augustus – Luke 2:1). Paul will describe how we have been adopted into a much greater line of royalty, status and privilege. We are adopted by the only Sovereign!

Packer, “Adoption is the highest privilege the gospel offers, higher even than justification.” This is privilege! Remind yourself daily of it!

Big Picture – 3:15- 4:1-3

Gal 3:15-4:1: Paul argues for the limited and temporary duration of the Mosaic law (Schreiner, 262). He tells us that the Mosaic law cannot cancel out the prior act of God’s promise to Abraham. Abraham is a pattern of saving faith.

19-25: The law was intended to be a babysitter, a custodian, until the promise of righteousness by faith alone in Christ arrived on the scene.

3:26: Believers are no longer under the law, for they are now God’s sons united with Christ by faith.

3:28: All believers are one in Christ and recipients of the promise made to Abraham.

4:1: The era under the Mosaic Law is conceived as a time of slavery. A minor occupied the same position of a slave in terms of an inheritance.

4:2: Paul applies the decision of a father to give the inheritance to his son to God's control of history and the realization of his saving promises.

- 4:4, "Fullness of time" A new period in the history of salvation has become a reality with the coming of Christ. Jesus has liberated us from slavery – we who were "under the law."

4:3: As children we were enslaved to "elemental principles." Paul is basically saying that both Jew and Gentile were enslaved to spiritual forces until the coming of Christ. Notice **4:9.**

So we need help! We are slaves apart from Christ! That's why the following verses are so powerful.

4:4-7

- Notice the entire **Godhead** at work: "God" "Son" "Spirit"
- Notice the "**double-sending**" – God rescues us from slavery!
- Notice the two clauses, "**to redeem**" "**to adopt.**" Those who are redeemed are God's sons.

Similarities of God's Adoption of Us & Our Adoption of Kids

Marvel at God's personal, particular, passionate, persevering, patient love for you...

#1 Adoption is Seriously Planned (4:1-4a)

Physically: Our adoption of children took serious planning. You would think it's easy.

- Kimberly and I had to make arrangements.
- We got a mini-van.
- We changed the rooms.
- We thought about names.
- We looked at financial matters.
- We read books; attended seminars; watched films; read stories; asked questions; searched for agencies... phone rang, foster care

Spiritually: Consider the purposeful planning of God.

A. **Each member of the Trinity** was involved (Gal. 4:4-7)

- Father administers it; notice the double sending
- Christ accomplishes it; notice a double purpose clause
- The Spirit applies it: "sent the Spirit into our hearts"

B. **"the fullness of time."** The Godhead's perfect timing.

- God is sovereign over human history.
 - Jesus came right on time; according to God's divine timetable.
 - The illustration of growing up into maturity (4:1-3) is compared to the fulfillment of God's plan for redemptive history.
 - Jesus himself knew he came at the right time. "The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the Gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).
1. It was the right time **theologically**. The law of Moses had done its work of preparing men for Christ (1-3).
 2. It was also the right time **culturally**.

Sometimes I wonder, "wouldn't be better if Jesus were alive today instead of then? He could be on [twitter](#), [Youtube](#). Nope.

C. Eph. 1:4-5. Paul reaches **back before the foundation of the world. It was no plan B for God. It's always been plan A.** It was no afterthought – it was a forward thought.

He will come again at just the right time!

What's with this new emphasis on adoption? New? You call before time began, new? **Taco Bell is new.** Before time existed, God already had adoption in mind. That's staggering.

#2: Adoption Requires the Right Qualifications (4b)

"God sent forth his son, born of woman, born under the law"

Physically: Not everyone is allowed to adopt children. (Good: **Cousin Eddies, and Uncle Ricos**). You can't be too young; you need a house.

- **background checks and questioning sessions.**
- My social worker knows more **about me than my mom.**
- **finances.** .. home was **suitable & safe for children.** ..
- **our past history.**
- **There are homework assignments; how will you discipline?** The **Purpose-Driven Paddle** of course.

Spiritually: There was only one qualified to rescue spiritual orphans. **He is the God-man. There is only one in this category.**

In theology we call this **"hypostatic union."**

This mystery left the disciples & others scratching their heads.

- **Jesus, "how old are you?"**

On my mother's side I am 12... On my mother's side I sleep on the boat.... On my mother's side I am thirsty.... On my mother's side I get hungry..... On my mother's side I have no place to lay my

head....On his mother's side I wept before Lazurus's tomb..... On my mother's side I was nailed to the cross....

Jesus is not one among many; he is the one and only! This is why we believe there is only one way – there is only one like him!

- Only Christ could be the mediator between man & God
- only Christ could be our sympathetic high priest

#3: Adoption is Costly (4c-5a)

“Born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law”

Physically: Perhaps the biggest obstacle to adoption is the price. It cost a lot of money to adopt children. We owe a large amount.

- **Kevin Ezell, Uk fan, His name is “I cost a lot”**
 - It also costs time,
 - It costs commitment,
 - It costs you painful personal changes.
 - It costs a life of sacrifice. The money is secondary to the emotional drain.
 - It's not the path of least resistance.
 - What else you going to spend it on? Every day I get to do global missions.

Spiritually: Galatians 4 reminds us that it cost God the Father infinitely more to adopt us. And it cost the Son is very own blood. Jesus both lived for us and died for us! It may cost families some paper-work, but it cost Jesus “cross work.” It may cost us red tape – it cost him, his red blood.

God's adoption of us is rooted in the cross of Jesus Christ.

- It cost Jesus sacrificial obedience, “under the law” – Active obedience.
- It cost Jesus sacrificial atonement, “redeemed us”

- **“under the law.”** Jesus was circumcised on the 8th day, grew up reading the Torah, attended the synagogue, and kept the God’s commands perfectly.
- **“redeemed us” – purchased us, bought us, freed us. He died for those who couldn’t keep the law.**
- **He lived the life we couldn’t live, and then died the death we should have died.**

How? Paul answers that in **Galatians 3:13**

He **redeemed us through the bloody cross**. Where he died the death we should have died, receiving the punishment that was due us! **Galatians 1:3-5, 2:20, 3:13, 5:1, 6:14.**

#4: Adoption Saves Children from Terrible Situations (5a)

“to redeem those who were under the law” ... “enslave

Physically:

- **emotional and physical abuse** from their past.
- **Some are sick.** Before the orphanage picked up my sister’s son, **Beniam**, he was living on the streets as a three year old.
- **Mercy**, was diagnosed with HIV.
- Others are **depressed and hopeless**. No self-worth. Starved for acceptance.
- **Before February, Eyasu lived in a bamboo hut, with no water (no baseball either)**
- **child prostitution and slavery**
- **No Christmas (Eyasu snowball in pocket)**
- No birthdays: No dad to take them to a baseball game; no mom to help them doing multiplication; no one to tuck them in at night and pray with them. No family vacations. No daddy-daughter dates. No father-son fishing trips.
- **twenty-five beds in one room.**

Spiritually: We were in a were enslaved orphans. Paul says twice that we were “enslaved” (3, 8).

God did not adopt us because of our attractive merits; he adopted us because of his amazing mercy!

“We were sons of disobedience” and now sons of God. “While we were yet sinners..”

#5: Adoption Involves a Legal Change (5b-7a)

“receive adoption as sons” “because you ARE sons” “not a slave but a son”

A. **Physically:** .. (To which, James said, Mississippi! “mama and papa”). ... “I went to the circus one time.”

- They were our children.
- Their birth certificates would state that we were the parents, and they bore our name.
- The identities of the children changed forever.
- They were legally declared our children by the one with the authority to declare it so.

Spiritually: The term “hiothesia” implies this transfer.

God the judge has slammed the gavel and made a transfer!

- “We ARE son” “No longer slaves BUT a Son”
 - We are legally God’s children.
 - New name, identity, home, status, new future.

#6: Adoption Involves the Spirit of Sonship (6)

“God sent the Spirit of his Son... Abba Father”

This text shows us how there are **no natural born children of in the household of God.** If you are a child of God, it is because God adopted you.

God is an adoptive Father! And he gives us his spirit to assure us of our place in the family.

The fundamental proof that you have been adopted is that he has given you the Holy Spirit!

Physically:

- I'll never forget the second day in the orphanage when Angela said, "Mama" and the next day when she called me "Papa."
- First day we went to get Joshua, he put his arms around us and kissed us and said, "**mama and pappa**"
- **I know these are our kids, not just because the legal work is done, but because of experiential connection we share.**
- **And I know there are kids because they want to eat Mexican everyday! That's sonship.**

Spiritually, God "sent the Spirit ... into our hearts, crying "Abba! Father."

"Crying" (Krazo) denotes a loud, earnest cry" (Matt. 9:27, Acts 14:14, 9:27) [Schreiner]. Believers loudly exclaim that God is their Father!

"Abba" was an Aramaic term for "Father." This is the term Jesus used for the Father in the Garden (Mark 14:36). It signifies several things by way of application for us.

- **Intimacy:** Authentic, Ongoing Prayer
- **Authority:** We obey our Father's will
- **Glory:** Honor the Father with your life. "I like to say: Ephesians 1:5, and 5:1 go together. Be imitators of Abba. "Be a little redeemer."

- **Family:** It means we are brothers and sisters because of the Holy Spirit and our Great Abba.
 - People often say I just don't know what it would be like to come into an **already existing family**. Sure you do. If you are a Christian, all of us came into an already existing family! You are part of the spiritual family of Abraham.
 - "I don't know what it would be like to be **transracially adopted**." Sure you do. Jesus was not an American!

"The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (8:16)

#7: Adoption Transforms the Child in Every Way (6b)

"sent the spirit into our hearts."

This heart work is ongoing the rest of our Christian journey.

- Notice **Galatians 4:19** – "Christ formed in you."

Physically: The kids take on the interests and patterns of their parents. "Walker Texas Ranger."

- They took on phrases, mannerisms, and the language of their parents. They bore all the marks of the family.
- They take on new eating patterns.
- "Green Vegetables – Starving kids in Africa!"

Spiritually:

- We bear the **fruits of the Spirit** (See 5:16-24) The Holy Spirit brings us to repentance.
- We are **led by the Spirit**. "we are being led by the Spirit of God as sons of God" (Rom. 8:14).
 - A **legalist** is led by rules

- A sensualist is led by lusts
- A materialist is led by money
- A “son and daughter of God” is led by the Spirit

God is disciplining us! HE disciplines those he loves. With kids, it is three steps forward and two back. He disciplines us with his word, among other ways, correcting us.

But aren't you glad God doesn't boot us out of the family? I'm like Rus Moore, someday I want to write **“Grounded for Life!”** sometimes. It's hard.

But I think about my Father's mercy with me; I think about God's patience with me; I am such a sinner; I am so prone to wander; yet God does not kick me out – he speaks tenderly; he disciplines me. He loves me with an everlasting love.

#8: Adoption gives the child the right to be an heir
(7)

“you also are an heir”

Paul concludes his illustration that began in 4:1.

We are no longer minors; we are no longer under the law; we are no longer slaves – We are sons!

Maybe you've been asking, “Why does Paul not say **“son and daughter?”** Why “Son?” Is he a chauvinist?

No, only sons got the inheritance. He has already told us that there is not distinction (3:28). We are all sons! – every male,

female, Greek, Jew, educated, uneducated – all who are in Christ, have the inheritance.

What is it like? Beyond words. I do know this...

The value of the inheritance is determined by the worth of the one who gives it. Our glorious God promises to grant us an inheritance; and in fact, he Himself is our inheritance!

Whom have I in heaven but you, Oh Lord?
And earth has nothing I desire besides you.
Psalm 73:25

Of all the things God could give us, the most precious satisfying reward in the universe is HIMSELF.

What do you get if you get adopted? You get GOD! FOREVER. You will see his face! In a place with no AIDS, no cancer, no orphans beds; no child prostitution; no sin.

For I consider that the sufferings of this present world....

God Saves

When prospective boys were shown to us, our hearts leaped for a little boy named, “Eyasu” which is basically “Joshua” in English. Joshua’s biological parents died of an illness and he had no siblings.

Receive: Do you want to be adopted?

Study: I would encourage you to mediate much on the doctrine of God’s adoption of you.

Act: “If the God is the father to the fatherless, and the church is the bride, then it makes the church the mother to the fatherless.”

- Consider adoption. Consider it as Plan A.
- Help adoptive parents.
- Raise awareness.
- Develop a fund.
- Move your life to an orphanage.
- Host orphans.
- Underwrite an orphanage.
- Visit an orphanage
- Help Stop Human Trafficking
- Transitional Assistance
- Take the this message of adoption to the millions who need the Gospel more than anything. Some object: what about evangelism? What about it? If orphans were a country they would be the 5th-8th largest country. There are more orphans than people in Russia. If you decide to do global evangelism, you have decided to evangelize orphans.

Do something.

There are so many, what can I do?

Alistair Begg story about ministering in a nursing home – “we don’t do it for them – we don’t do it to eradicate the problem – we do it unto Jesus. The orphan has a face. That face is a Galilean, we minister unto him.