

True Heirs
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Galatians 3:21-29; 4:1-7

Opening: Adoption has gained a prominent place in our society especially within the church (and even in our class!) A recent LifeWay survey found that seventeen percent of protestant church members say someone from their church has adopted a child from the U.S. in the past year. Fifteen percent say someone from their church has adopted a child from another country.¹

It's thrilling to see families lovingly embrace these precious additions.

- **Why does our government require a court proceeding for adoption?**
- Let's review: Galatians was a letter to newly planted churches where some false teachers were spread a false gospel. **What was it?**
- Paul demonstrated how God justified Abraham and made him righteous 430 years before the Law of Moses and 2100 years before Jesus came to earth as Messiah. **What did we say about Abraham's salvation?**
- If the law does not save us why was it given? **What was the answer?**
- In this text Paul explains how the law points us toward faith in Christ and how that faith makes us true heirs in the family of God.

Big Idea: Followers of Christ have been eternally adopted in the family of God. The question is, am I fully enjoying my place in God's family and looking forward to my eternal inheritance every day?

- Our text begins at verse 23, but verses 19 sets it up:

Galatians 3:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

- The law was “given alongside the promise to show people their sins. But the law was designed to last only until the coming of the child who was promised.”ⁱⁱ That would be Jesus.
- Wiersbe: *“Law shows the sinner his guilt, and grace shows him the forgiveness he can have in Christ. The Law does not make us sinners; it reveals to us that we already are sinners (see Rom. 3:20).”*ⁱⁱⁱ

Galatians 3:23–29 (ESV)

²³ Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. ²⁴ So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.

- Paul uses terms like “imprisoned” and “held captive” in describing the law.
- Rather than prison, most scholars interpret this as “protective custody.”
- The law of God was also a “guardian” or “schoolmaster.” This example relates to the culture of that day.
- *“The word paidagōgos is difficult to render into English since there is no exact parallel to this position in modern society. Phillips suggests “a strict governess.” The pedagogue here was not a “schoolmaster” (kjv) but a slave to whom a son was committed from age six or seven to puberty. These slaves were severe disciplinarians and were charged with guarding the children from the evils of society and giving them moral training. This was like the Law’s function until **Christ** came and people could **be justified by faith in Him.**”*^{iv}
- We said last week that no one could keep the law perfectly.
- Trying to keep the law might keep me out of some trouble but it won’t get me into the family of God with an inheritance in Heaven.
- Picture a child in an orphanage with strict (not mean) guardians. **What is the good news about their situation**

there? What kinds of things might a good, loving orphanage put in place to keep them safe? What kinds of things might they teach them for their good?

- Sidebar: We're talking about the law not being able to save us. However, the Ten Commandments and the commands of Jesus have another role AFTER we're saved. When a child leaves the orphanage do they just forget all the things they were taught to keep them healthy, safe, and out of trouble? Not if they're smart! Those things don't make them a part of the family but they do still help them live their life as part of a family.
- **An orphanage might be a safe place but what is the child missing?**

²⁵ But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

- **How is an adoption hearing an illustration of what verses 28 and 29 say about being adopted into God's family?**
- Now in chapter four, instead of an orphanage, think of a rich Roman or Greek family with a child in the care of a governess or guardian.

Galatians 4:1–7 (ESV)

Sons and Heirs

4 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

- Imagine a wealthy father dies and leaves a fortune to a minor child. Until they become an adult, they are still under the care of guardians. But when they turn eighteen or 21 they receive full, legal rights as the heir.
- These new Galatian converts had been regenerated (born again) when they trusted Christ by faith. While we might call them “baby Christians,” the fact is they were fully adopted as heirs; members of the family of God.
- These Judaizers (false teachers) were trying to take them back to “second childhood” with the law and regulations as their guardian.
- As long as a child is living in the orphanage they are still an orphan.
- If a wealthy heir turns eighteen but continues to live like a little child with a governess, they’re missing out on their rights and privileges as the heir.
- If you are a follower of Christ you are an adopted heir in God’s family.
- Verse five says Jesus came to redeem us so we can be adopted.
- **What does that word “redeemed” mean?**
- I was a slave to sin but Jesus purchased me from slavery and set me free!
- I love the old hymn by Fanny Crosby:

*“Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,
His child and forever I am.” - Fanny J. Crosby*

⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

- “Abba” in Aramaic was like “daddy” in English. How could I ever feel worthy enough to call the Creator of the universe Daddy? He placed His own Spirit into my heart to give me the confidence that I am his child!

Romans 8:16 (ESV)

16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

- Followers of Christ have been eternally adopted as children of God.
- The question: Am I fully enjoying my place in God's family and looking forward to my eternal inheritance every day?
- First, we have to make sure we've really been adopted. That goes back to the simple gospel message of trusting that Jesus' death and resurrection make it possible for me to have this eternal inheritance.
- God's grace makes it possible for my faith to accept His gift.
- Let's consider what it looks like to enjoy our full rights in God's family.
- **How does my place in the family deal with...**
 - **My sin problem (John 3:16)?**
 - **The guilt of my past (2 Cor. 5:17)**
 - **Temptation (1 Cor. 10:13)**
 - **Fear that I don't know how to live the Christian life (Eph. 1:3)?**
 - **My feelings of insignificance (Matthew 10:29-31)?**
 - **My feelings of fear, unrest, or discontent (Is. 41:10, Phil.4:6-7)?**
 - **My need for answers to life's problems (Heb. 4:16, Jas.1:5)?**
 - **Assurance of my place in the family (Rom. 8:38-39)**
 - **My view of the future (1 Peter 1:3-4)?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Followers of Christ have been eternally adopted as children of God.
- The question: Am I fully enjoying my place in God's family and looking forward to my eternal inheritance every day?
- Am I living like a King's kid? Do I regularly run to Him crying "Abba?" Do I rest in the security that He will care for and provide for me?
- Knowing that we've been adopted into God's family should give us a feeling of stability as we live our lives and hope as we look toward spending eternity with Him in Heaven.

- J.I. Packer wrote, “Adoption is the highest privilege that the gospel offers: higher even than justification.”^v What? Higher than justification?
- Packer: “Justification is the primary blessing, because it meets our primary spiritual need...we need the forgiveness of our sins, and assurance of a restored relationship with God, more than we need anything else in the world; and this the gospel offers us before it offers us anything else...But this is not to say that justification is the highest blessing of the gospel. Adoption is higher, because of the richer relationship with God that it involves...Adoption is a family idea, conceived in terms of love, and viewing God as father. In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship, and establishes us as His children and heirs. Closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is...greater.”^{vi}
- Salvation isn’t just about avoiding hell. It’s about adoption into God’s family. If I’m a follower of Christ then I’ve been eternally adopted.
- The question: Am I fully enjoying my place in God's family and looking forward to my eternal inheritance every day?

ⁱ <https://lifewayresearch.com/2018/01/24/adoption-foster-care-commonplace-in->

ⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ga 3:19). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 1, p. 703). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{iv} Campbell, D. K. (1985). Galatians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 600). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^v J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pp. 186-188

^{vi} *ibid* <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/scotty-smith/justified-and-adopted/>