



river west church

Adoption: The Privileges of God's Children

Galatians 4

Pastor Christopher Coffman

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There are certain truths in the Bible that are so startling they simply sound too good to be true. For many of us, our experience has taught us that if something *sounds too good to be true* then it *must not be true*. Such is the predicament we run into when we consider what Paul has to say about our adoption in Galatians 4. Although the concept of adoption is fairly easy to understand it's an incredibly difficult thing to believe in. Something deep within each one of us is skeptical of the idea of God welcoming broken, sinful people like you and I into His family. How could such an outrageous privilege belong to someone who flounders and fails at life so often? It simply sounds too good to be true! Knowing this, Paul's aim in this passage is to convince us of truths that sound too good to be true. Throughout this chapter, Paul unpacks the unbelievable privileges that belong God's children. If the Galatians don't understand and embrace these privileges they will never live freely and fully in this life...and neither will we!

Who You Are: Sons...Not Slaves

The first privilege that Paul wants God's children to understand embrace is our new identity in Christ. The message of the Gospel reminds us at every turn that who we are has radically changed! To drive home this point Paul deliberately contrasts two ways to relate to God in this passage. We either relate to God as slaves or sons. Those who relate to God as slaves obey Him either out of a deep-seated fear of rejection, or a desire to earn God's acceptance (Gal 2:15-16; Rom 8:15). Thankfully, because of Christ's work on the cross, Christians no longer need to relate to God as slaves (4:7). Yet, although many of us have wrapped our minds around this truth, very few of us have wrapped our heart around this truth. Much like the prodigal son, when we sin we often come to God saying, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants" (Lk 15:19). But God will simply not allow you and I to relate to Him as hired servants, "for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith" (Gal 3:26). Those who are convinced of the Gospel know that there is nothing we can do to lose our place in God's family...because we did not earn the right to be called His children in the first place! We are who we are today all because of God's grace to us in Christ!

What You Have: The Spirit

As followers of Christ consider their new identity as God's children, sooner or later they run into a problem. Even if we can somewhat *wrap our minds* around the fact that we're God's children we continue to have a hard time *wrapping our hearts* around this truth. Although we know that we're God's children intellectually our experience of adoption is less than perfect. Even though we're sons we still feel like slaves. It's here that God gives his children exactly what they need: A Spirit that convinces us from within that we are God's children! (Gal 4:6) When we put our faith in Christ God sends His Spirit into our hearts to convince us of our adoption, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom 8:16) even though we don't feel like it most of the time. This is why Paul refers to the Holy Spirit as "the Spirit of adoption" (Rom 8:15). The Holy Spirit is not only God's means of convicting us when we sin and comforting us when we suffer, God's Spirit also convinces us of our adoption when we feel like failures in life.

What This Means For You: Freedom. Significance. Joy.

At the end of this chapter, after carefully unpacking the privileges that belong to God's children, Paul does something unexpected. As a pastor, he compares himself with a woman in labor and a perplexed parent (vv 19-20). Although this picture is a bit odd for most of us to swallow, the important thing to notice is how deeply Paul wants his readers to understand and embrace the truth of the Gospel. Deep down he is worried that the Christians in Galatia will forfeit the privileges that belong to

God's children. If they let go of the Gospel they will live like religious slaves not royal sons. Paul can't stomach this idea. Only those who are convinced of the promises of the Gospel are free to enjoy the privileges that belong to God's children! If we allow God's Spirit to convince us each day of our adoption, our lives will be flooded with a bottomless sense of freedom, significance, and joy!

This Week

Do you believe that God has adopted you into His family by grace? Perhaps you need some convincing. Read Romans 8:12-17 and Galatians 4:1-6. As you do, ask God to send His Spirit to convince you of His love and your new identity in Christ.