

## Galatians Study 5

### Read Galatians 4:1-7

The Experience of the Gospel!-Summary: God loves and accepts believing sinners as if they had done all His only Son had done—He accepts us as sons/daughters.

What is your relationship with your father like? How do you think that affects your view of God?

Tim Keller: There is often a great chasm between what we believe and what we experience practically and emotionally. Paul teaches us that we are justified in Christ—God sees us as perfect in His sight just as wise, righteous, and beautiful as His own Son. Martin Luther says this “is easy to utter in words, but in use and experience is very hard.” This echoes Paul in Gal 4:6-7 who says we must cherish and rejoice and see ourselves as adopted sons/daughters of God!

### Read Galatians 3:26-4:7

1. Paul imagines a child-heir of a very rich family (who is still taken care of by guardians). How does this illustrate the condition of a person who is under the law/doesn't have a relationship with God?

2. Imagine back in the history of our country or currently in some countries of the world. What are some of the differences between living as a slave or living as a child?

3. How do you think you would feel if you had been a slave and someone came and not only set you free, but also adopted you and made you an heir?

4. What has God done in order to make us His children? (vs 4-6) What was Jesus' part? The Holy Spirit's part?

5. What is the significance of being adopted into God's family? What difference does that make in your life?

~Read Romans 8:15-16 What does "Abba" mean, why is calling God "Abba" significant?

6. Which of the characteristics of a slave mentality (a person still living as if they are "under the law") are strongest in you? How can you overcome that mentality? How can we daily rejoice in the change God has made in our station of life (from slaves to freedom and adoption)?

## EXTRA READING

A.

The importance of adoption “The notion that we are children of God, His own sons and daughters ... is the mainspring of Christian living ... Our sonship to God is the apex of Creation and the goal of redemption.” –Sinclair Ferguson, *Children of the Living God*

“If you want to judge how well a person understand Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. [Adoption] is the highest privilege the gospel offers ... not justification—by which we mean God’s forgiveness of the past together with his acceptance of the future—is the primary and fundamental blessing is not in question ... But ... adoption is higher, because of the richer relationship with God that it involves.” –J.I. Packer,

Knowing God, chap 19 “According to the Scriptures, pardon, acceptance, and adoption are distinct privileges, the one rising above the other in the order in which they have been stated...while the first two properly belong to (the sinner’s) justification, as being both founded on the same relation [with God] as a Ruler-and-Subject, the third is radically distinct from them, as being founded on a nearer, more tender, more endearing relation [with God] as Father-and-child ... the privilege of adoption presupposes pardon and acceptance, but is higher than either...” –James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*

B.

Objections to and distortions of adoption “I have heard it seriously argued that the thought of divine fatherhood can mean nothing to those whose human father was inadequate, lacking wisdom, affection or both, nor to those many more whose misfortune it was to have a fatherless upbringing ... But this is silly. For it is just not true to suggest that in the realm of personal relations, positive concepts cannot be formed by contrast... The truth is that all of us have a positive ideal of fatherhood by which we judge our own and others’ fathers [How else could we be unhappy with our bad fathers?] and it can safely be said that the person for whom the thought of God’s perfect fatherhood is meaningless or repellent does not exist.” –J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, chap 19

“In the sense that God is the Creator of all things, it is true that the Bible sometimes speaks of His Fatherhood. He is the ‘Father of the heavenly lights’ (James 1:17) and the One who brought the universe to birth. But that is not the most common usage... We are not, by nature, children of God. We need to become his children ... In fact, by nature, we are children of wrath, not children of God (Ephesians 2–3).” –Sinclair Ferguson, *Children of the Living God*

“The idea that all are children of God is not found in the Bible anywhere ... The gift of sonship to God becomes ours not through being born, but through being born again. ‘To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or of a husband’s will, but born of God.’ (Jn. 1:12-13) Sonship to God, then, is a gift of grace. It is not natural but an adoptive sonship, and so the New Testament explicitly pictures it.” –J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, chap 19

### C.

Adoption defined “Adoption is not a change in nature, but a change in status. If we fail to see this truth, we will reject the power of our adoption ... Adoption is a declaration God makes about us. It is irreversible, dependent entirely upon His gracious choice, in which He says: ‘You are my son, today I have brought you into my family.’” –Sinclair Ferguson, *Children of the Living God*

“The profound truth of Roman adoption was that the adoptee was taken out of his previous state and “placed in a new relationship of son to his new father...All his old debts are canceled, and in effect the adoptee started a new life as part of his new family ... [On the one hand, the new father] owned all the [new offspring’s] property, controlled his personal relationships, and had the rights of discipline. On the other hand, the father was liable for the actions of the adoptee, and each owed the other reciprocal duties of support and maintenance.” –Francis Lyall, *Slaves, Citizens, and Sons*

“The Roman law, it was a recognized practice for an adult who wanted an heir, and someone to carry on the family name, to adopt a male as his son ... The apostles proclaim that God has so loved those whom he redeemed on the cross that he has adopted them all as his heirs, to see and share the glory into which his only begotten Son has already come. “God sent his Son ... to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights as sons.” (Gal.4.4-5). We, that is, who were “foreordained to adoption as sons...(Eph. 1:5). “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are ... When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. (1 Jn.3.1-2).” –J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, chap. 19

### D.

Biblical theology of adoption “God and religion are not less than they were; the Old Testament revelation of the holiness of God, and its demand for humility in man, is presupposed throughout, but something has been added. A new factor has come in New Testament believers deal with God as their Father. –J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, chap 19

“According to our Lord’s own testimony in John’s Gospel, God’s fatherly relation to him implied four things. **[1]** First, fatherhood implied authority. The Father commands and disposes; the initiative which he calls his Son to exercise is the initiative of resolute obedience to his Father’s will ... (6.38, 17.4; 5:19; 4:34). **[2]** Fatherhood implies affection. The Father loves the Son. “The Father hath loved me...”(5.20, 15.9-10). **[3]** Third, fatherhood implied fellowship. “I am not alone, for my Father is with me.” “The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone...”(16:32, 8.29). **[4]** Fourth, fatherhood implied honor. God wills to exalt his Son. “Father

... Glorify your Son”. “The Father .. has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son...” (17:1; 5:22-23). All this extends to his adopted children. In, through, and under Jesus Christ their Lord, they are ruled, loved, accompanied, and honored by their heavenly Father... [“Father ... let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am...” (17:23-24) –J.I. Packer, Knowing God

E.

The Spirit of Sonship “[We all have a native] inability to believe that salvation is entirely of God’s grace and love.... We are slow to realize the implications of that. We are sons, but we are in danger of having the mindset of hired servants. Furthermore, if there is nothing else the Devil can do to smear our joy in Christ, he will try to produce in us what our forefathers used to call a ‘bondage frame of spirit’.... That is why he sends us the Spirit of adoption.

Paul says: “You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father’ (Rom. 8:15-16).

“...Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit ... [which] brings us into a deep-seated persuasion that we really are the sons of God. If it is a fact that ... God has adopted us into his family, then the Spirit assures us this is true, and enables us to live in the enjoyment of such a rich spiritual blessing... He sends his Spirit into our hearts, bringing us the deep spiritual and psychological security that rests on the objective fact that our sins are forgiven and we belong to the Lord.” –Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God

“Let me remind you of how Thomas Goodwin ... states the matter... He pictures a man walking along a road with his little boy, holding hands—father and son, son and father. The little boy knows that the man is his father, and that his father loves him. But suddenly the father stops, picks up the boy, lifts him up into his arms, embraces him and kisses him ... The boy is no more a son when he is being embraced than he was before. The father’s action ... has not changed the status of the boy, but oh! the difference in the enjoyment! That is what is described in Romans 8:5...” –D.M. Lloyd-Jones, Romans 8.5-17, p.280

“It is a manifestation of God unto the soul...It is a thing better felt than spoken of. It is no audible voice, but a ray of glory filling the soul ...corresponding to that audible voice, “O man, greatly beloved,” (Dan.9:23)... “The Spirit does not always witness to our condition by force of argument from sanctification, but sometimes immediately by way of presence as the sight of a friend consorts without help of discourse...” (Richard Sibbes) –D.M. Lloyd-Jones, Romans 8.5-17

The problem: “Because I did not believe God loved me on the basis of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection...

The result: ...therefore I could not face the risk of seeing my sins as my own responsibility. So (1) having tried to clear my conscience by blaming others, I (2) turned on the afterburners and made myself busy with work and duty. Or to use Luther’s analogy, I was full of active

righteousness. I looked to my outward activity to feel good about myself and judged others by my own active standards...

The turning: But now I understood what Luther was talking about: “in the righteousness of faith we work nothing, we render nothing to God, but we only receive and allow another to work in us.” This is what he calls a “passive righteousness that is credited to our account through faith. This was Christ’s righteousness, bought with the price of his blood on the cross. This I received by faith. The reason it had been so difficult for me to have a personal faith in Christ was that I had not experienced total forgiveness. But I had now brought real sins...including my attitudes of self-dependence and blame-shifting—to a real Savior and they had been forgiven...How awesome it is to be loved unconditionally by a holy, righteous God. –Rose M. Miller, From Fear to Freedom