

The General Electric Power Company Series

Galatians | Ephesians | Philippians | Colossians

Lesson #4 – Galatians 4

Main Idea

The concept of adoption is one that Paul presents 5 times in the New Testament on the books Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. These happen to be three of the more theologically intense and important books in the Bible, and certainly with regards to the Reformation and our understanding of salvation. Webster defines adopt as *to take by choice into a relationship; especially to take voluntarily (a child of other parents) as one's own child*. For you and me this is critically important in understanding the unique relationship that we have for God. For me the first question that comes to mind is this – why would God choose us to be His people? As is often the case, the Bible has the exact answer to our questions. Ephesians 1:4 tells us that God *chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight*.

When I read a passage like this, I come to one conclusion – with the Gift that we have been given through Christ there is given a tremendous responsibility. Listed below are some of aspects of adoption that can help us gain a better understanding of adoption as they relate to our relationship with God through Christ.

- The natural order is that parents choose the children
- Generally, children are adopted into a home that promises greater opportunity, security, and a future
- The adopted child does not offer anything to merit their being adopted
- Parents agree to take the child as their own and provide for their wellbeing (i.e. legal relationship)

As we study Galatians (and the other books in the GEPC series), let us consider with renewed interest the special relationship that we have with God as adopted sons and daughters.

Outline for the Book of Galatians

Greetings & Introduction: Galatians 1:1-10

Part 1: Paul defends his apostolic ministry of the pure gospel. Galatians 1:11-2:21

Part 2: Paul defends the gospel of justification and salvation by grace and faith alone. Galatians 3:1-4:31

Part 3: Paul defends the freedom Christians have to love one another and live by the Spirit. Galatians 5:1-6:10

Concluding Remarks: Galatians 6:11-18

Questions for Consideration

1. How should recognizing that we are no longer slaves to sin (and the Law) as Believers in this era of grace impact the way that we live our lives? Consider also the concept of adoption.
2. In verse 15 Paul talks about the Galatians losing their joy. In your life, what causes you to lose your joy? How would others describe you (i.e. do others consider you full of joy)? Consider Jesus' words from John 15 provided below.

⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ **I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.** ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

3. With all of the ongoing hostility in the Middle East, verses 21-31 that contrast the sons of Hagar and Sarah are worthy of discussion.
 - a. Read Genesis 16:11-12. What was said to Hagar of Ishmael and who said it?
 - b. Read Genesis 17:19-22 and Genesis 22:15-18. Contrast the words stated to Abraham regarding the promises through the line of Isaac.
4. Part of the challenge in the era of grace is that it is easy to become distant from God. Read Deuteronomy 8:6-20. How are you doing in terms of remembering the Lord? If you are not doing well, why not?

Homework Read Galatians 5. Meditate on verses 22 and 23 that discusses the *Fruit of the Spirit*. Look at your life and take an inventory of what you see.



Galatians 4 (New International Version, ©2010)

¹ 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. ² The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. ³ So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces^[a] of the world. ⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.^[b] ⁶ Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba*,”^[c] Father.” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but God’s child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Paul’s Concern for the Galatians

⁸ Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now that you know God—or rather are known by God—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable forces^[d]? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? ¹⁰ You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

¹² I plead with you, brothers and sisters, become like me, for I became like you. You did me no wrong. ¹³ As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you, ¹⁴ and even though my illness was a trial to you, you did not treat me with contempt or scorn. Instead, you welcomed me as if I were an angel of God, as if I were Christ Jesus himself. ¹⁵ Where, then, is your blessing of me now? I can testify that, if you could have done so, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. ¹⁶ Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?

¹⁷ Those people are zealous to win you over, but for no good. What they want is to alienate you from us, so that you may have zeal for them. ¹⁸ It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is good, and to be so always, not just when I am with you. ¹⁹ My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you, ²⁰ how I wish I could be with you now and change my tone, because I am perplexed about you!

Hagar and Sarah

²¹ Tell me, you who want to be under the law, are you not aware of what the law says? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the free woman. ²³ His son by the slave woman was born according to the flesh, but his son by the free woman was born as the result of a divine promise.

²⁴ These things are being taken figuratively: The women represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar. ²⁵ Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present city of Jerusalem, because she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶ But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷ For it is written:

“Be glad, barren woman,
you who never bore a child;
shout for joy and cry aloud,
you who were never in labor;
because more are the children of the desolate woman
than of her who has a husband.”^[e]

²⁸ Now you, brothers and sisters, like Isaac, are children of promise. ²⁹ At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now. ³⁰ But what does Scripture say? “Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman’s son.”^[f] ³¹ Therefore, brothers and sisters, we are not children of the slave woman, but of the free woman.

Footnotes:

- a. [Galatians 4:3](#) Or *under the basic principles*
- b. [Galatians 4:5](#) The Greek word for *adoption to sonship* is a legal term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture.
- c. [Galatians 4:6](#) Aramaic for *Father*
- d. [Galatians 4:9](#) Or *principles*
- e. [Galatians 4:27](#) Isaiah 54:1
- f. [Galatians 4:30](#) Gen. 21:10

