"Our Adoption as God's Children"
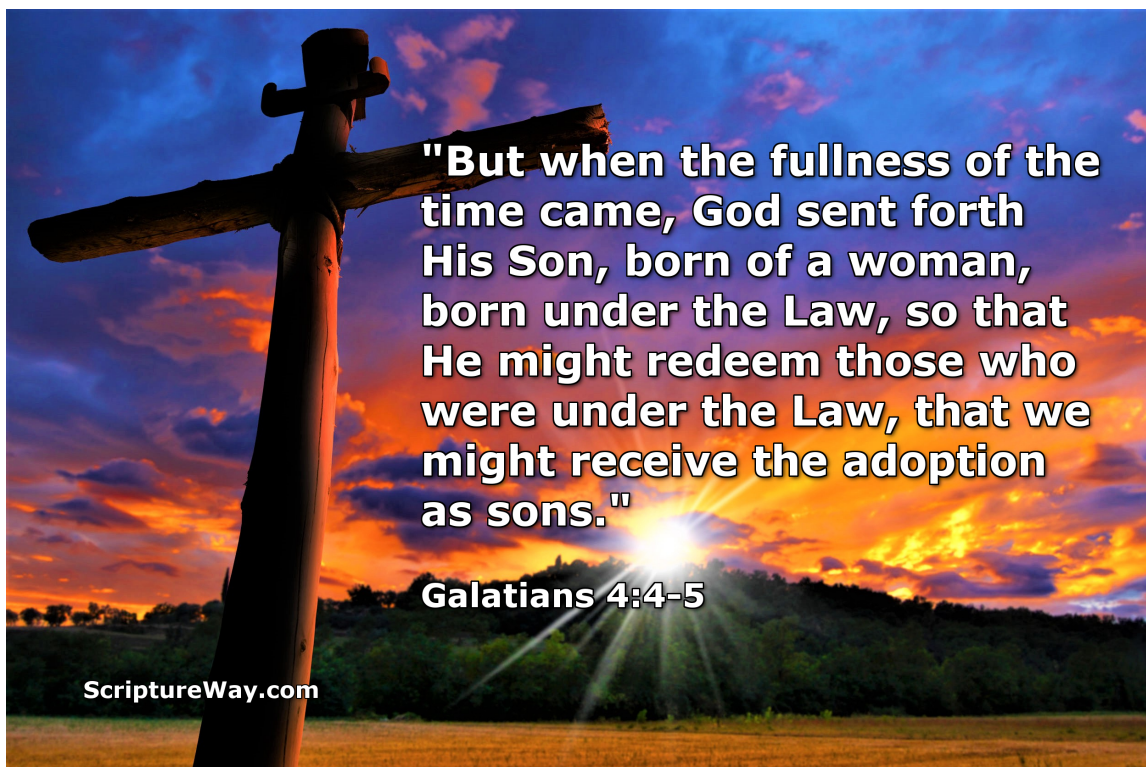
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Receive the Adoption as Sons - Galatians 4:4-5 - 123RF Photo - Used under license

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." (<u>Galatians 4:4-7</u>)

This lesson is the fourth and final lesson in the series about the "Children of God" (<u>Ref. 1</u>, <u>Ref. 2</u>, <u>Ref. 3</u>). This article explains the nature and benefits of our adoption as children of God. This article also describes the Roman adoption process. If you are not sure that you are a child of God, please refer first to the article, "Becoming a Child of God" (<u>John 1:12-13</u>, <u>Ref. 1</u>).

Consider. As an adopted child of God, how would you describe your relationship with your heavenly Father? What do you consider to be the benefits of being a child of God?

Definition. Let's begin by examining the definition of adoption. The Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary defines *adopt* as *"to take by choice into a relationship, especially: to take voluntarily (a child of other parents) as one's own child"* (Ref. 4).

The Greek word for *adoption* in the New Testament is *huiothesia* (Ref. 5). The word *huiothesia* is a combination of two words, *hyiós* ("son") and *títhēmi* ("to place") – "properly, *sonship* (legally made a *son*); *adoption*" (Ref. 5). The word *adoption* (*huiothesia*) occurs five times in the New Testament (Romans 8:15, Romans 8:23, Romans 9:4, Galatians 4:5, Ephesians 1:5, Ref. 5).

Roman Adoption - Process. In ancient Rome, adoption of boys was a fairly common procedure, particularly in the upper senatorial class (Ref. 6). Every senator's duty was to produce sons to inherit the estate, family name, and political tradition. Roman families typically restricted their families to three children. For families with too many sons and the ones with no boys at all, adoption was the only solution (Ref. 6). Augustus, the first emperor of the Roman Empire, is possibly the most famous example of an adopted son in ancient Rome (Ref. 6, Luke 2:1).

In Roman society, accomplishing an adoption began with the process where the father sold his child to the adopting father twice and bought back his child twice. On the third sale of the child, the "selling" father did not buy back the child. The adopting father went to the Roman magistrate and made the case for the child to become part of his family and to be under his protection. When the magistrate approved, the adoption was complete (Ref. 7).

Roman Adoption - Benefits. William Barclay's Daily Study Bible (<u>Ref. 7</u>) describes below the benefits for the adopted person in ancient Rome.

1. The adopted person lost all rights in his old family and gained all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family (<u>Ref. 7</u>).

2. The adopted person became heir to his new father's estate. Even if other sons were afterwards born, it did not affect his rights (<u>Ref. 7</u>). By Roman law all the children whether sons or daughters inherited equally (<u>Ref. 8</u>, <u>Ref. 9</u>).

3. In law, the old life of the adopted person was completely wiped out; for instance, all debts were cancelled. He was regarded as a new person entering into a new life with which the past had nothing to do (<u>Ref. 7</u>).

4. In the eyes of the law he was absolutely the son of his new father (<u>Ref. 7</u>).

Now let's turn our attention to the scriptures that the Apostle Paul wrote about the nature and benefits of our adoption as children of God.

God planned in advance for our adoption. Our adoption as God's children was God's idea and God's initiative. Paul wrote about God the Father, "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He *predestined* us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will ..." (<u>Ephesians 1:4-5</u>, italics added). The Greek word for *predestine* is *proorizó*, which means *to pre-establish boundaries* or *to mark out beforehand* (<u>Ref. 10</u>).

Our adoption as God's children is made possible through the redeeming work of God's Son, Jesus Christ. "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might *redeem* those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (<u>Galatians 4:4-5</u>, italics added). The Greek

word for *redeem* is *exagorazó*, which means *buy away from, purchase out from*, or *rescue from* (Ref. 11).

The redeeming work of Christ has provided us (who believe in him) these benefits:

- *Our sins are forgiven* - "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7). Like the adopted child in the Roman culture, our debts are cancelled.

- *God has sent the Holy Spirit into our hearts* - "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' " (Galatians 4:6). The word, *Abba*, is used as the term of *tender endearment* by a beloved child – i.e. in an *affectionate, dependent* relationship with their father; "*daddy*," "*papa*" (Ref. 12).

- *We are no longer slaves but have become children in God's family* - "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 4:6-7). We through faith in Christ are in full possession of the privileges of God's children - accepted, beloved, cherished, and honored with our Father's confidence (Ref. 13).

- *God has made us heirs* - "Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God" (Galatians 4:7). Because God has adopted us as his children, he gives us spiritual blessings now and in the life to come. Through the grace and work of God, not our own efforts, God has given us salvation and an inheritance which is imperishable - eternal life (Romans 6:23, 1 Peter 1:3-5, Ref. 14).

Apply. In prayer, thank God for planning for your adoption and reaching out to redeem you through the saving work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Thank God for giving you his blessings and favor as a child of God. Thank God for providing you an inheritance - eternal life.

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