

“Adoption as Sons”

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Sunset at Keuka Lake, Penn Yan, New York, USA - Ephesians 1:4-5
Photo by Whitney V. Myers

"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." (Ephesians 1:4-5)

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26)

"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'" (Romans 8:15)

This lesson is written for people who already are believers in Jesus Christ. This lesson teaches 1) Before the foundation of the world, God planned to adopt us as his sons (children), 2) We become God's adopted sons through faith in Jesus Christ, and 3) God has given believers in his Son the

Spirit of adoption, not a spirit of bondage.

Consider. Do you believe that God has adopted you as his child?

1. Before the foundation of the world, God planned to adopt us as his sons (children)

In Ephesians 1:1, Paul writes, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus." Paul is writing not to unbelievers but to believers in Jesus Christ.

Paul also writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as 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" (Ephesians 1:3-5, italics added to the text for emphasis).

God's plan to save us through His Son and to adopt us as his sons has been established since before the world began. The Greek word in Ephesians 1:5 for *adoption* is *huiothesia* (pronounced hwee-oth-es-ee'-ah), which means literally *to place as a son* (Ref. 1). Thayer's Greek Lexicon further describes the meaning of the word *adoption*: "*the nature and condition of the true disciples of Christ, who by receiving the Spirit of God into their souls become the sons of God*" (Ref. 1). Because of God's kind will and advanced planning, God has adopted us -- believers in Jesus Christ -- as his sons.

2. We become God's adopted children through faith in Jesus Christ

In Galatians 3:26, Paul writes, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." Note that Paul is writing to all the believers comprising the churches in Galatia (Galatians 1:2).

There is only one criterion for becoming an adopted son (child) of God -- faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. *Faith* in Jesus Christ means *belief, trust, and confidence* in Jesus Christ (Strong's Concordance - Ref. 2). Faith

is a gift from God, and is not something we earn through our own works (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The phrase, "sons of God," in Galatians 3:26 is inclusive, not exclusive. In the New Testament, the phrase "sons of God" equally refers to male and female believers (HELPS Word-studies - Ref.3). The Greek word for *sons* in Galatians 3:26 means literally *a son by birth or adoption* and figuratively *anyone sharing the same nature as their Father* (Ref.3).

God's adoption of us as his children through faith in Christ applies equally regardless of our ethnic or racial or national background, economic status, or sex. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

3. God has given believers in his Son the Spirit of adoption, not the spirit of bondage

In Romans 8:15 Paul states that God has given us (believers in Christ) "the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.'" First, the Holy Spirit is a gift by God to believers in Jesus Christ (Acts 2:28). Second, the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of adoption) brings us into a close, affectionate relationship with God as our heavenly Father where we like children call him "Abba," the equivalent of "Daddy" or "Papa" (Ref. 4).

The Spirit of adoption that we receive as God's adopted children is more pleasant than the spirit of bondage which is in the world. In Romans 8:15 Paul says that the Spirit we have received is not the spirit of bondage [*slavery*] (Ref. 5). The spirit of bondage keeps people in slavery to sin (John 8:34) and in fear of death (Hebrews 2:14-15). In contrast, through the redemptive work accomplished by Christ (Galatians 4:4-5, Ephesians 1:7), we are freed from slavery to sin and death (John 8:31-36, Romans 8:1-2).

Through his Son, Jesus Christ, God has adopted us into a loving relationship with himself as our heavenly Father and us as his beloved children. God has given us -- his beloved adopted children -- the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of adoption.

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Prayer. Thank you, Father, for your plan to adopt us as your children through your Son, Jesus Christ. Thank you for the redemptive work of Jesus which has freed us from the power of sin and fear of death. Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit which enables us to cry out, "Abba! Father!"

Related Lessons

"Our Adoption as God's Children" - Galatians 4:4-7

"Becoming a Child of God" - John 1:12

"What is Redemption?" - Ephesians 1:7

References

1. <https://biblehub.com/greek/5206.htm>
2. <https://biblehub.com/greek/4102.htm>
3. <https://biblehub.com/greek/5207.htm>
4. <https://biblehub.com/greek/5.htm>
5. <https://biblehub.com/greek/1397.htm>