



World Christian Fellowship

www.wcflondon.com
wcflondon@gmail.com

Galatians

Lesson 38- You can't lose your inheritance

Galatians 4:7-11, *Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. ⁸ But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹ I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.*

Paul was giving the churches in Galatia a very powerful concept about Adoption. Paul is telling the Galatians, "You have already been adopted as sons of God, with all the rights and privileges that come with that sonship.

Why do you think something is missing?

Why would you want to go back to what you used to have, the shadow, when you have the substance and the reality?

So, this is another of his arguments for salvation by faith alone.

The Galatians had heard the true gospel of salvation by faith, believed it, put their trust in Christ, and they had become true believers.

Galatians 3:3, “You have begun, you have begun by the Spirit.”

They were true believers.

Galatians 4:8, “You didn’t know God,”

Galatians 4:9, “But now you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God.”

Paul affirming the reality of their salvation.

- You are believers,
- you have begun in the Spirit,
- you have experienced the power of the Spirit,
- you have heard the truth of the gospel, and
- your lives have been transformed.

Now why are you going back to a system of external behaviours?

Galatians chapter 4 first 7 verses Apostle Paul was talking about adoption.

He talks about a child, a child who doesn’t differ from a slave when he’s young.

He talks about the fact that, “When we were children in that condition we were held in bondage to the elemental things of the world,”

- The Jews were bondage to the law,
- The Gentiles were bondage to a false religion.

Then Christ came and we were redeemed. We came to a point of being adults. We were mature in Christ and received the adoption as sons.

Galatians 4:6, *“You are sons.”*

Galatians 4:7, *“No longer a slave, but a son.”*

This is all about adoption.

Paul is the only one who uses the word “adoption” in the New Testament,

- Letter to Romans,
- Letter to Ephesians, and
- Letter to Galatia.

The word is simply a compound word in the Greek language: *‘huios’*, “son”; *‘tithmi’*, “to place.” It means “to place someone as a son.”

When we’re dealing with the Bible please do remember that we are dealing with an ancient book. We are meditating and discussing about social customs, Values, and behaviours that are two thousand years old.

Modern day believers in 2020 when we say “adoption” we are talking about something very different from what was in the

mind of a citizen of the Roman-Greek world in New Testament times.

Now modern adoption is a kind of charitable action.

- a) Modern adoption is done by people who want to rescue children primarily, whether they are children from a foreign country who are in an orphanage and living a very difficult life, or whether they are even more difficult, disabled children, or ill children, children with birth defects or whatever.
- b) There are beloved Christian parents and others as well who want to relieve the suffering of those children by getting them out of those orphanages, out of that kind of environment, and they bring them into their family as babies.
- c) There are adoptions of those babies who are born to mothers who didn't want to have an abortion, but don't want to handle the child and so those children are adopted.
- d) Adoption in the Western world is an adoption of babies or children, small children from foster homes may be adopted as well.
- e) People who are childless also adopt

But, basically, people don't adopt adults. They do not adopt adults; they adopt children.

Sometimes people say that we need to bring the Bible into modern times. That is wrong. We don't need to do that!

Rather we need to take the modern person into Bible times and recreate the setting. That is what we always do in studying the Word of God.

Paul is dealing with a Roman idea here. There is no set of laws in the Old Testament about adoption.

Did Jewish people adopt?

Yes!

The Jewish people adopt for two reasons.

1. Because they were childless, and as you know there was a certain stigma with being childless;
2. Very frequently when parents were in old age and needed someone to care for them. So, they would adopt someone who could be a kind of caretaker.

So that is familiar to any Jewish historian in terms of Jewish adoption. But, again, they have no laws on adoption, and there are no statements regarding it in the New Testament. Paul is not talking about that. He is talking to Gentiles in the Greco-Roman world. He is talking in terms that they understand.

- In the ancient Roman world, they did not adopt children!
- They adopted adults, and they adopted male adults. Very rarely was a female adopted.

That is why when Paul talks about adoption he talks about sons, because adoption was done with male, adult young men. Rarely does anyone in our society adopt an adult. There are no compelling reason to do that in our society.

History of Romans Adoption

Almost always an adult male between the age of twenty to thirty years of age were adopted.

They were adopted into wealthy families, families of status, families with an estate, families of prominence, and virtually all those kinds of families did adoptions.

Even if they had children, even if they had sons, they would adopt. But if they had sons that they didn't think were suited for the future of the family, they would adopt another son.

If they had no sons, obviously they would adopt in order to have an heir.

There was a power in ancient Rome called '*patria potestas*', which means "the father's power."

- A biological father could disown a born child.
- More frequently than not, it would be a girl.
- But the father could also disown a son.
- He could also sell a son for adoption.
- He could also kill a son for whatever reason he wanted.

So, the father had absolute power over his children. If he had no sons or if he had sons that he didn't want to become the heirs of his estate, he would adopt.

They were chosen, not as babies, because many babies didn't survive childhood. You wouldn't go through all the adoption to have a baby that would die. Furthermore, you didn't know what kind of a young man this baby would become.

They waited until they were in their twenties or thirties and they could see their leadership potential, their mental skills, their physical strength, their wisdom.

They were looking for someone who would be the next *patria familias*, "father of the family." The father wanted someone to take over the estate.

The purpose was to bring an heir into the family who was worthy of this estate and could guarantee the future of that estate going forward.

This would take place because either they had no son, or they had no son they felt was qualified.

The head of the family was both

- a manager of the family's estate – a bookkeeper and a financial caretaker for the family's fortune, and
- a priest, who ran the family religion – whatever gods they worshiped, whatever household gods, whatever

forms of worship were part of that heritage were his responsibility.

So, when they adopted young men, they were looking for an heir who could step into that role to be the keeper of the family's fortune and the keeper of the family's reputation in the future.

Poor and less noble parents who had such desirable sons would gladly make those sons available to a noble family for a price.

The price could be very high. They felt it was an honour. It was an honourable act to give your son to one of the patrician families, one of the families of the senators, the people who were elite.

You may think that if you have got a really bright, sharp young son, maybe he could take the family he is in and elevate that family and move that family up the social ladder to make them one of the elite families.

This can't and didn't happen.

There was an elite class of families in the Roman world that was essentially unapproachable and unavailable to the rest of the working-class society.

So, if you wanted to advance your capable son, this would be a great way to do that, and the only way to elevate him.

Such adoption wasn't

- ✓ Secret,
- ✓ very public, and
- ✓ official.

It was so official that at a high level it required senate confirmation. Wealthy families with estates, reputations, and many of them were senators. Many of them emperors in Rome.

It was a long drawn out, official, and very formal ceremony, like a wedding.

Like a wedding when the bride gives herself to the husband, she doesn't intend to never speak to her family again. She doesn't intend to forget her family, even though they cleave together and create a union all their own. They continue to be connected to the family that was their birth family. They create a new family, but they have a connection to the family of the past in some way.

It was not a complete forsaking of your family, so that the family in the future would in some ways be able to enjoy something of the success of the adopted son as they stayed connected in some way with him.

However, he would take the new father's name, and he would bear that name for the rest of his life. He would get all of the

rights and privileges of that family. In fact, he would be the heir of everything that family possessed.

Roman Adoption – definition: *“The condition of a son, chosen and given to a father and family to which he doesn’t naturally belong, to formally and legally declare a son who is not a son by birth, but a son by choice, granting him complete rights and inheritance.”*

There were five results of this adoption.

1. You have a new father.
2. You are heir to his estate. That is the primary reason for this adoption. If you were adopted to become the primary heir, and the couple had more sons, those sons could never replace the adopted son who was declared the heir. They could share in the inheritance like co-heirs, but that adopted son would be the ultimate heir.
3. All the adopted son’s previous debts and responsibility were wiped out. If he owed anything to anyone anywhere, that was all gone.
They erased his past life, except the connection with his family. It was as if he had never lived before. Everything was set aside. Everything was erased. He is now legally and absolutely the son and heir of his new father, and there is no past life to consider.

4. He would have to be purchased with a high price, which is one of the reasons that poor families would make this overture of a son that was desired by a wealthy family.
5. A man cannot disown an adopted son. It was permanent. (Remember father can disown a biological son)

So much care was taken about who was adopted. The adopted son then is more secure in his inheritance than a born son. A born son could be disowned, sold, adopted out, or even killed.

This is such a noble event that nine of the Caesars were adopted.

- Julius Caesar had no children, so he adopted Augustus.
- Augustus had no sons, so he adopted Tiberius.
- Remember Nero, even he was adopted.

Nine Caesars, nine emperors were adopted from other families into the royal line.

Certainly, the Galatians would have understood what Apostle Paul intended them to understand what happens when God adopts us into His family.

We were in a family with no future, no hope of ever achieving what that new family possesses.

- We are chosen!
- We are then purchased.
- We have a new Father
- We are then given the name of the new family.
- We then become heirs of everything that that father possesses; and that can never change.
- We say, “Abba! Father!”

We are so intimately connected to the new Father that we say, “Papa. Daddy.” This shows an intense relationship.

We have all the rights and privileges!

John 1:12, *to those who believed in Him, He gave “the authority to be called sons of God.”*

It is a position of authority.

In the millennial kingdom we will rule and reign over the world with Christ.

In heaven we will sit with Him on His throne.

We will be, “heirs and joint heirs with Christ” of all that God possesses.

Romans 8:17, *and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

Witness to the Adoption:

In the adoption ceremony there were seven witnesses need to be signed.

Why would you have witnesses of the adoption?

To establish the legality of it and testimony to it. In case in the future other children of that wealthy family would contest and dispute the adoption. When the estate starts getting passed out and they are overlooked, there could well be conflict in the family.

Galatians 4:5, “we have received the adoption as sons,”

Galatians 4:6, “because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts.”

What is the Spirit sent into our hearts to do?

“To witness that we are the sons of God.”

Romans 8:16, *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,*

The Holy Spirit is the witness that we are the sons of God.

Isaiah 11:2, *The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.*

There are seven features of the Holy Spirit.

They are demonstrated in the menorah with its seven flames. The fullness of the Spirit is a sevenfold fullness.

So, the fullness of the sevenfold Spirit is God's witness to the legality of our adoption that can never be contested, because of the witness of the Holy Spirit.

Incredibly rich picture of Roman adoption! Amen!

Galatians 4:7, *Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*

By the way, slaves could be adopted both slaves and free men could be adopted. Slaves, by the way, were not all the kind of slaves you might think. Many of them were highly educated, and many of them were professionally skilled people. That was just their social status.

The point of adoption was to give the estate to that adopted son. It was that he would be the heir through God, by the immediate agency of God. God is choosing an heir.

Think of your salvation that way.

God chose you before the foundation of the world to be an heir of everything that He possesses.

This is the magnanimous nature of the grace and love of God. This is astonishing!

God's choice and through God's power we have become an heir. God the Father has chosen us, brought us to maturity in Christ, paid for us by the blood of Christ, made us sons and heirs and it's all by love and grace.

What the gospel of faith did for you?

What Christ gave you when you believed in Him?

You have that inheritance.

You are a son and you have been adopted. You have everything that God can give you and you have it all.

Romans 8:14, Children of God

Romans 8:15, Son of God,

Romans 8:16, Sons of God,

Romans 8:17, We are heirs.

Romans 8:14-17, *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. ¹⁵For 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." ¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.*

What does it mean to be an heir of God?

To inherit everything God possesses!

It will all be ours in the glory of heaven, and we are fellow heirs with Christ.

In other words, our inheritance is the same inheritance Christ receives, which is all that God possesses.

Romans 8:18, *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

Get your eyes where they need to be. Set your focus not on things on the earth, but things above.

The suffering in this life is not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us, and that is the full glory of all of God's possessions, and its staggering promises.

Romans 8:28, *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

If you have been saved and called into His family as a son, everything that happens in your life works together for good. Everything that happens in your life works together for good.

What is good?

Your eternal inheritance.

No one is going to be replaced.

No one is going to be disowned, because of Romans 8:29-30, We are all predestined by God to be conformed to Christlikeness.

In heaven, Christ will then have many brothers.

“Whom He predestined to that end, He called. Whom He called, he justified. Whom He justified, He also glorified,” spoken in the past tense as if it happened.

- From the foreknowledge of God,
- the predestination of God,
- the calling of God,
- the justification of God,
- to the glorification by the power of God,
- He brings us into His presence.

Romans 8:31-39, *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: “For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for*

the slaughter.”³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Who could successfully overthrow the plan of God?

No one.

You want to know what your inheritance is?

All things. All things.

If God gave His Son to die to make you a son, then He will also give you everything that sonship promises.

God loved us, that’s why He chose us. He will bring us to the fruition of that love.

- ✓ You have all that God possesses. You are a son, as Christ is a son, an heir, and a joint heir.
- ✓ You have the full inheritance. Everything is yours. Everything in God’s glorious heaven is yours.

All spiritual blessings in the heavenlies are in Christ.

Now, you don’t have it yet.

Romans 8:22-23, *For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.²³ Not*

only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

Adoption is for the purpose of inheritance.

It's not about sympathy and compassion. But adoption as sons in that Roman context, and therefore in Pauline language, is for the privilege, the right to have an inheritance.

Everything that God possesses, forever.

V 8-11, ⁸ *But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. ⁹ But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years. ¹¹ I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.*

Are you going back to your old debt-ridden, sin-loaded life?

Are you going back to your old impoverished family?

Are you going back to childishness, back to bondage, to rituals and rites, superficial religion?

Are you so bewitched?

Galatians 3:1, *O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?*

This is how he feels about any religious system that requires rituals, whether it's beads, prayers, sacraments, atonement, or any other kind of external duties.

V 8, The responsibility of sonship!

Adoption brought responsibility in the ancient world.

- You needed to be loyal to your new father.
- You needed to show gratitude for his love and grace.
- You needed to show appreciation for the inheritance that you were given.

At the time before you came to know Christ, you didn't know God.

There is only one true God in the universe, the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The only one way to know God is through Christ!

John 14:6, *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*

So, anybody who doesn't come to God, the one true God, through Christ, doesn't know God.

When you hear people talk about God, pray to God, say, God bless you. I believe in God. I am a very religious person. They don't know God unless they have come to the true God through faith in Jesus Christ.

They don't know God. The one they think is God is the devil.

1 Corinthians 1 says to the people who don't know God. You will never find God by human wisdom. God can't be known by human wisdom.

Romans 1 says when they knew God, at least they had essential knowledge God, they glorified Him not as God but created non-gods, made idols.

The whole world is full of people who talk about God, but absolutely do not know God.

V9, *But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?*

It says in the book of Genesis that Cain knew his wife, and she bore a son. Intimate union, as intimate as it gets in the physical world.

When Mary was pregnant, the New Testament says Joseph "had not known her."

That's an essential for a sexual relationship, the most intimate of all human relationships.

In the Old Testament, God says about Israel.

Amos 3:2, *"You only have I known of all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."*

You didn't have that earlier but now you have that. You have that intimate love relationship with God, so that you cry out to God, "Abba, Father. Papa, Daddy."

You can't know Him until He is first set His love on you. He initiates that relationship. We love Him because He first loved us. We know Him because He first knew us.

He says to Nathanael in the gospel of John.

John 1:48, *Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."*

He saw him with the eyes of omniscience. He saw him with the eyes of love. He saw him with the eyes of predestination.

God knew you before you knew Him. God loved you before you loved Him. God called you before you called out to Him.

1 Thessalonians 1:9, *For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,*

We were rescued from idols, turning from idols to the living God. That's what it means to know God, to have an intimate relationship with God.

You've come to know God because He knows you.

John 10:14, *I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*

Jesus means in this intimate relationship.

This is the wonder of salvation.

John 6:44, *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*

V 9, *“that you turn back?”*

How is it that you are reverse-converting again to the weak and worthless elemental things?

Any form of false religion, including bondage to the Mosaic law on the part of Jews, is a weak and worthless elemental thing when compared to the true gospel in Christ.

You desire to be enslaved all over again?

Are you converting backwards?

Are you going back to your old religion?

Are you going back to Judaism, which wasn't even your old religion?

Legalism is a false religion.

Going back to dietary laws, going back to Sabbath observance, going back to feasts and festivals, Passovers.

Are you going back to what you were delivered from?

Are you going back to your old family, your old bondage?

Isn't sonship enough for you?

Israel was led out of Egypt.

Pretty dramatic!

The plagues.

Did they see the hand of God?

They did. They saw the hand of God in the plagues, and their protection.

When they got out into the wilderness what did they ask Moses?

Exodus 14:10-12, *And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the Lord. ¹¹ Then they said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? ¹² Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, 'Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians'? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness."*

What was Moses reply?

Exodus 14:13-14, *And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see*

today, you shall see again no more forever. ¹⁴ The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”

Do you think that they learned their lesson?

Exodus 16:3, *And the children of Israel said to them, “Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”*

Do you know what the Lord did?

The Lord provided water, and the Lord provided meat.

Exodus 17:3-4, *And the people thirsted there for water, and the people complained against Moses, and said, “Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?” ⁴ So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me!”*

They had seen miracle after miracle after miracle, including the parting of the Red Sea, water, food created, and they were seduced to go back to Egypt.

That’s what the Judaizers were trying to tell the Galatian believers to do. Go back to what the Lord had rescued them from.

What was it specifically?

V 10, *You observe days and months and seasons and years.*

They were beginning to absorb the Mosaic calendar, the external rituals and ceremonies.

None of them is bound on the church anywhere in the entire New Testament.

There is no command in the entire New Testament to keep the Sabbath or any other of the Jewish calendar events - festivals, rites, rituals, dietary laws – all gone.

“You’re going backwards.”

Colossians 2:16-17, *“Don’t let anyone act as your judge in regard to food or drink or a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath—things that are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”*

Don’t go back to that.

It’s being bewitched.

It’s worse than that.

V11, *I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.*

Why many people still want to hold on to the traditions of Roman Catholicism?

The theology of sonship, the theology of adoption, really is the gospel.

Before salvation, you didn't know God. You were part of the devil's family, who disguised the true condition with religion. But you were caught up in worthless, weak, elemental things. You may have been religious, but you didn't know God. That was your condition before salvation.

At salvation, God, who chose you before the foundation of the world, predestined you to be conformed to the image of His Son. Holy Spirit reside in your life by His love and grace.

God knew you. He joined Himself to you in love and awakened your heart, and you responded by joining yourself to Him. He came to you, and you came to Him. He knew you, and you knew Him. He loved you, and you loved Him in return.

Now after salvation, you are waiting for the unfolding of your inheritance. This is the gospel. It's about what God has prepared for them that love Him in heaven.

It's not about riches on this earth.

In fact, this earth is full of suffering; even the apostles knew that.

This is the gospel.

- You didn't know God.
- You were in weak and worthless religion.
- You were in bondage to the law and sin.
- You were hopeless,
- You were helpless,
- You were blind, and
- You were ignorant.

God desires to have an intimate relationship with you, and so He sets His love on you. By the power of the Spirit through the preaching and hearing of the gospel, He establishes a relationship with you, and you with Him.

God knows you, you know Him.

God loves you, you love Him.

You are freed from bondage.

This happened all by faith in Christ alone and nothing else.

Now you are an adopted son waiting for the full inheritance that is reserved for you in heaven.

Don't need to add anything to that.

If you do, if you go back, then all this effort was in vain.