

The Spirit of Adoption

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[0 : 00] Well, this week was a week of disturbing news.

! And I paused to even share this story, but I would guess that many of you have already heard, vivid illustration today of our subject, of what we are going to be speaking with and dealing with in our passage. Those of you who are aware of Joshua Harris and know of the books that he has written in his past, the one that stands out that maybe many of you are familiar with is I Kissed Dating Goodbye. You're probably aware of that book. A man who in his early years was discipled by a prominent pastor, a man who for many years was a part of a multi-site, multi-campus ministry, a very prominent ministry. And yet, in this last week, made an announcement that he and his wife of about 20, 21 years were going to separate. They were going to get divorced.

Now, if that wasn't shattering enough, I kissed my marriage goodbye, is what he posted in his Instagram account on Friday. And I'll just read an excerpt of it.

He says this, The information that was left out of our announcement, that is namely divorcing his wife, is that I have undergone a massive shift in regard to my faith.

The popular phrase for this is deconstruction. The biblical phrase is falling away. By all the measurements that I have defined a Christian, I am not a Christian.

[2 : 17] Many people tell me that there is a different way to practice faith. And I want to remain open to this, but I'm not there now.

Martin Luther said that the entire life of a believer should be repentance. There is beauty in that sentiment, regardless of your view of God.

I have lived in repentance for the past several years, repenting of my self-righteousness, my fear-based approach to life, the teaching of my books, my views of women in the church, and my approach to parenting, to name a few.

To my Christian friends, I'm grateful for your prayers. Don't take it personally if I don't immediately return your call. I can't join in your mourning.

I don't view this moment negatively. I feel very much alive and awake and surprisingly hopeful. Now, I don't raise this illustration this morning to disparage Joshua Harris to say anything about him as an individual that he has not said about himself.

[3 : 42] And namely, the fact that every part of his life leading up to this point was just a facade. It was just a show. It was just a game.

It wasn't real. It was superficial. And in saying that, he did not have up to this point the Holy Spirit living and working and illuminating his life.

That's by his own confession. Not personal judgment on him. But it does stand this morning as a wake-up call.

a wake-up call to all of us in this room. How easy it is to go through the motions, to rise to the highest levels of religious leadership, to study the Bible week in and week out, to even teach it in public venues, and then to shipwreck everything and to abandon the very core of what you said you believed, and even wrote that you believed and taught that you believe and people were encouraged and even inspired by the statements you made about the Bible.

And yet, it wasn't real in his life. What do you say to that?

[5 : 09] how do you respond to such devastating news? How do you make sense of it all?

Where do we go in the Scriptures to be able to begin to decipher what could possibly have gone wrong in Joshua Harris' life, in the new trajectory of the path that he's on right now?

Now, by God's grace, the story isn't over yet. The last chapter has not been written. God's intervening grace can continue, can come, and overcome this time of blindness for him.

But make no mistake, there has not been, up to this point, saving faith. Otherwise, the words of Jesus would not be true that we find in Matthew chapter 10 verses 21 and 22.

It says this, Jesus, in speaking to his disciples about coming persecution, says, brother will deliver brother over to death, the father his child, the children will rise up against their parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my namesake, but the one who endures to the end will be saved.

[6 : 32] not because of any internal strength or fortitude, but because of outside power of God in dwelling a life and helping them to overcome by the strength of God in every moment.

So where are you this morning? As you do a heart check, where is your faith? We're going to begin to talk about this this morning.

It is kind of a continuation of our series in Romans 8, but a detour, I would say, because as we have been looking through Romans chapter 8, this morning we would be in verse 15 through 17.

Let me read that for us, Romans 8, 15 through 17, from page 944 in your pew Bible. And we're going to use this as a launch pad to move our way over to Galatians chapter 4, a companion passage that talks about the same thing.

We're going to be talking about the significance of adoption today. What does adoption mean for you this morning as a believer in Jesus Christ?

[7 : 53] And the reason why we want to spend two weeks is because it's such a significant truth for us to understand. So if you're with me in Romans chapter 8 verses 15 to 17, it says this, For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption by which you are called, the spirit of adoption as sons by whom you cry, Abba, Father.

The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And if children then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Paul has been following this through in the last chapter for us to help us understand that any of us who are in Christ share a couple of privileges.

First, if we're in Christ there is no condemnation for you. But also if you are in Christ then the spirit of, the spirit who is in you helps you to overcome the spirit of law.

It says that in verse 2. Trying to remember, there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus for the law of the spirit of life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

[9 : 28] And over the last couple of weeks we've seen what the Holy Spirit accomplishes in a life. In verse 10, if Christ is in you although the body is dead because of sin the spirit is life because of righteousness.

In verse 13, if you live according to the flesh you will die but if by the spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. For all who are led by the spirit of God are sons of God.

And Pastor Saul's last point last week for us was this. Our response to the spirit is an evidence of our salvation. How are you responding to the spirit?

How am I responding to the spirit? When the spirit speaks do you listen? Is there the continual pattern of death to sin or is there a consistent pattern of life to righteousness?

Because the Holy Spirit as God in you will lead you to righteousness. sin and the spirit cannot coexist in the same place.

[10:54] Who is your master and Lord? God or yourself? The spirit or sin? So we're going to take this we're going to talk about adoption this morning the significance of the spirit of adoption and we're going to move our way to Galatians chapter 4 verses 1 to 7 and Pastor David next week will pick this up in Romans chapter 8 and carry it through help to re-articulate and re-emphasize many of the same points that we find here in Romans 8 but I just want to lay the foundation for our understanding about the significance of adoption and what it does for us as God's people.

Galatians chapter 4 verses 1 to 3 is where we're going to start if you're again if you're using the pew Bible it's on page 974 let me read this for us it says I mean that the heir as long as he is a child is no different from a slave though he is the owner of everything but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father in the same way we also when we were children were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world now I want to begin this morning in helping to develop this for us I want us all to understand some of the context of what's taking place here in Galatia it begins as the apostle Paul defines the problem of their true status the problem of their true status now just to give you some background this is a church comprised of both

Jews and Gentiles and they seem to have this difficulty recognizing and appreciating the finished work of Christ on the cross that declares finally and categorically no condemnation that's what we've been studying in Romans chapter 8 but those in Galatia especially those who were Jews wanted to continue to add new requirements to those who were Gentiles because in their own estimation as Jews and having come from Abraham they had a heritage they had a heritage that was special and favorable and they wanted those who were Gentiles to enjoy the same benefits of their heritage by becoming circumcised so Paul wants to help lead them in their true understanding of their true identity and he calls them sons here at the very beginning of Galatians chapter 4 verse 1 he says your sons okay I'll grant you that but I want you to understand what that really means see as they think they are sons and in thinking they're sons they think that they're heirs they would say we are sons of Abraham we're

God's special people as Jews we are recipients of the law we are heirs of God's favor we are a distinguished community we're God's own special people we're not like you Gentiles in that we have been set apart we have a history of devotion and not a history of idolatry we have a history of obedience and not a history of bondage as you we have a history of divine revelation and not a history of darkness as you Gentiles and in so doing they wanted to set themselves apart as we are sons but now Paul uses that very statement and turns the tables on them to help them understand the significance of what's really going on in their lives you think you're sons but you are really slaves you're really slaves and he goes on here in verse 1

I mean that an heir as long as he is a child is no different from a slave though he is owner of everything but is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father he uses several words here to help them understand their true condition he begins with the word sons but in the Greek it's not the word for son that would be necessarily somebody who is considered an heir it is somebody who is considered an infant somebody who would have no rights no responsibility but an infant where there is very little if any benefits a status of legal incompetence is what he intends to communicate he talks about the fact that as a son they are also under meaning they are under authority under somebody else's control and then he uses guardians and managers to help bring this full picture of this cultural setting that they would have been very familiar with to help them understand their true condition as somebody who was under a guardian it was somebody who a guardian was somebody who cared for those who were under age a house manager is somebody who tended to the responsibilities the administrative responsibilities of the house itself that coupled with the word for guardian that he uses in chapter three helps bring full picture to the confinement of their real status they were no better than slaves they had no ability to make decisions and in the ancient day they were assigned to these managers and guardians who would look after them who would teach them who would manage their own finances and they could not do anything or go anywhere without one of these people one of these slaves along with them essentially

[17:20] Paul says you think you're something special you think you're a son but you are actually no better than a slave and then to bring this reality home he amplifies it in verse three you demonstrate your true nature by your sin you prove in evidence who you really are by your continual gravitation and tendency you're bent towards sin he says in the same way we also when we were children were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world that's who you were but now you continue to revert back to that same way of life and it calls into question your true identity he repeats this again in a couple of verses drop down to verse eight in nine look what he says there formerly when you did not know God you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods but now that you have come to know

God or rather to be known by God how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world whose slaves you want to be once more your previous way of life demonstrated an identity that was coupled with sin it was bound by slavery to your flesh and now that you call yourself a Christian how is it that you continue to revert back to those same elementary principles those same things that were true of the basic parts of who you were as an individual verse 3 you were enslaved verse 8 you were enslaved notice the coupling verse 3 talks about slaves to the elementary principles of the world verse 9 slaves now again to the elementary principles of the world simply you were once bound to sin just like the Gentiles don't go back don't go back those who are in the spirit cannot go back

Paul reiterates the same message in Romans chapter 6 verses 15 and 16 where he says what then are we to sin because we are not under the law but under grace by no means do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves you are slaves of the one whom you obey either of sin which leads to death or of obedience which leads to righteousness who's your master you can only have one you cannot have two and you are the slave of the one to whom you obey you are the slave to whom the one you give your allegiance whether that be an allegiance to sin or whether that be an allegiance to the spirit which leads to righteousness you cannot have it both ways who is your master and that's the point here in

Galatians and Paul will pick that theme up again and again in Romans chapter 8 the first several verses we've been looking at you can only have allegiance to one master is it the master to the flesh or is it a master to the spirit who will lead you to righteousness and then in Galatians chapter 5 Paul picks it up again and says walk in the spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh the one you serve is the one who owns you that is your master but at times it might not be super obvious at least externally it is possible to accomplish great things for God and never be a Christian don't look at supposed fruit the outward appearances and think that something is true internally that is not

Jesus talks about this in Matthew chapter 7 verse 21 he says many will say to me that day Lord Lord did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name and then I will declare to them I never knew you depart from me you workers of lawlessness so what is it how do we know what does it take to have assurance of the reality of the spirit in our life it takes a commitment to faith a commitment of a heart to believe what God has said and to act on it because the just will live by what church just will live by faith it's as simple as that it comes down really to freedom that's what we've been talking about this year it comes down to freedom that you obey not out of a sense of duty you obey out of a gratitude in your heart to

[23:15] God it is an expression of delight to him walking in faith the just will live by faith that's what it is and with the dilemma in full view in verses one to three now Paul begins to turn to hope he talks about now the plan of our adoption the plan of our adoption in verses four and five it says this but when the fullness of time had come God sent forth his son born of a woman born under the law to redeem those who were under the law so that we might become or receive adoption as sons there is this five fold strategy that we're going to talk about briefly in just a moment but a five fold strategy that results in one thing this one thing that comes at the very end of verse five it's it's marked out by so that you might receive adoption adoption adoption was in the mind of God before the universe was even spoken into existence

God had adoption in mind this should blow us away not only salvation not only deliverance not only forgiveness of sin but sonship and daughtership adoption to God a relationship and intimacy with him not just rescue but fellowship that comes because of adoption I want you us to understand the significance of this term the significance of the term adoption because Paul could have used a lot of words he could have described this new relationship in terms of new birth Jesus did that with Nicodemus Paul has done that in his writings as well he could have described this new relationship in terms of justification we've talked about no condemnation in Romans 8 we were familiar with justification that we see there in

Romans 8 some have actually suggested that Paul may have invented this word because he is the only writer to use it once in Romans 8 once in Galatians 4 and nowhere else in the New Testament it's never used in the Septuagint it's never used by those who were in classical Greek those who were writers during Paul's day it is the first time it's ever used in all of history Paul uses it here in Galatians so why why use this term what is its significance what is Paul trying to communicate well I think first of all Paul wants to obliterate the Gentile Jew distinction he wants the Jews to understand the significance of onenesship to

Christ but more importantly he used this to level the ground before the cross to make the sweetness of the gospel glorious in their eyes in reality you all started as slaves in reality you all experience the new birth in reality you are all adopted God doesn't see a difference between Jew or Greek now we're all heirs and in reality God the father sees Abraham's seed not as Israel but as Christ and if you are in Christ then you are an heir which we're going to get to in just a moment in Galatians chapter 3 verse 28 he talks about removing the distinction there is neither Jew nor Greek there is neither slave nor free there is no male or female for you are all one in

Christ Jesus in this truth statement it is not used to bring the Jew down it is not given to make the Jew feel like a lesser individual it is used to expound the greatness of the wonder of their new relationship it is to raise the Jew up to the highest level possible you are a first generation son you are a first generation daughter you don't have to look back to Abraham you don't have to go through the generations it starts with you and Jesus coming and making you one of his family you are a first generation son or daughter and to accomplish this plan there's a five fold strategy that we see here in these verses 4 and 5 it says when the fullness of time had come

[28 : 35] God sent forth his son born of a woman born under the law to redeem those who were under the law now we've spent a lot of time talking about this over the last several weeks at the right time God the son became a man lived a perfect life and applied his life to our account that is the fullness of his plan in brevity but notice this we add nothing to the equation you add nothing to this equation it is only and all of God who took the initiative to make this possible for those who are in Christ Jesus God from eternity devised a master strategy not just of rescue and salvation but also of adoption and sonship

God took the initiative the divine work of the Trinity God the father sending his son Jesus to accomplish all that was necessary to make us righteous before God applying that to our account and then allowing the Holy Spirit to come and then lead us back to God the father this wonderful beautiful circle that all represents the wholeness and the oneness of the Trinity that now we get to take part of in some glorious way that will unfathomable way those who are in Christ Jesus can now live in a whole new way the law of the spirit of life really has set us free from the law of sin and death and because of the work of Christ on our behalf now there are a whole litany of privileges that are available to us and that's what

I want to look at next the privileges of our adoption the privileges of our adoption in verses 6 and 7 because because you are sons God has sent the spirit of his son into our hearts crying Abba father so you are no longer a slave but a son and if a son then an heir through God and I see three privileges here there are probably several others that we could point to but three in particular that are spelled out here in these couple of verses the first is that we have the same indwelling Holy Spirit we have the same indwelling Holy Spirit Paul's point in all of this is to help you understand that the same blessings and benefits that were afforded to Jesus are also distributed to you if you are in

Christ so that when God the father looks at his son Jesus he says that's my son and when the Holy Spirit looks on Jesus he says that's the father's son and the moment when that was most clear was the moment of Jesus baptism the moment when Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and in coming out of the water the father says this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased and then the spirit comes on Christ and enables him for ministry that moment of Jesus being marked by the Holy Spirit was not only his moment but it is also our moment it is a moment of sonship where sonship was declared and sonship was confirmed and for those of you who are in

Christ you also experience the benefits of sonship as in the same way that Jesus did in that the spirit comes on you he indwells you he empowers you he prepares you for righteousness he gives you all the resources you need to live the kind of life you have been called to live the spirit indwells!

[33 : 07] We also find that we have the same intimacy with the father the same intimacy with the father God has sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts crying out Abba father borrowing from John Piper he says this Abba is an Aramaic term given to Greek audiences it comes at a crucial point in Jesus life the only time where it is ever used in all of the gospels happens in the garden of Gethsemane we find it only in Mark chapter 14 verse 36 this is when Jesus is crying out in his moment of greatest weakness just hours before he goes to the cross and he cries out in urgency pleading with the father Abba father he says nowhere else in all of the

Old Testament nowhere else in all the New Testament except for here and also in Romans 8 is this term used how is it that Paul uses an Aramaic term and now distributes it to Greek audiences it is because it is Jesus his turn and not that that provides extra what I want to say extra help for us but it connects us so closely to the intimacy of that moment it drives us even closer to Christ in emulating the same terms for the father that he did that only Jesus used now because of the work of Christ and adoption we can use it too never before would the disciples or any follower of the Jewish tradition ever dreamed of using such a term for God the father but Jesus coined the term to describe and help us understand the new relationship that we have adopted sons and daughters of

God Jesus himself creates this relationship talk to him in this intimate way never flippant but always full of reverence deep intimacy that the disciples observed first hand and now this phrase runs through the first century church regardless of their background to help them understand now not only the closeness of their relationship with the father but the connection they have with Jesus himself in being able to use this same term and finally we have the same inheritance the same inheritance through Jesus you are no longer a slave but a son and if a son then an heir through God isn't that an interesting phrase in Romans 8 it's an heir of God in Galatians chapter 4 it's an heir through

God and what Paul wants his readers in Galatia to understand is they have access to all of the things that have been given to Christ only because of their relationship to Jesus himself not because of their inheritance because of their legacy because of their heritage to Abraham it is only now through this new relationship they have through Jesus and through adoption you can inherit those things if you follow your biological father Abraham who was a man of faith Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him to righteousness you can also enter in to this same inheritance the same promises if you like your biological father embrace the seed Jesus Christ and you are in Christ to experience all of the benefits of the inheritance he has to give to you you are an heir with

Christ everything that belongs to him belongs to you what more could you ever hope for what more could you ever ask for what more could you ever want what more could you ever live for you have it all in Christ I have it all in Christ nothing else can satisfy nothing else will help to overcome the disappointments of this life and the frustrations and trials you face than hoping in God and understanding the significance of your adoption with him let's pray in Christ Thank you.