

PP Ghost Sightings: Seeing the Holy Spirit in Action Today

Galatians 4:4-7-The God Who Bears Witness We are God's Children

7/11-12, 2015

Illus A couple tried for 15 years to have a child, and she could not get pregnant. But they were approached about the possibility of adopting a baby that had not yet been born and they said yes. On the day of the adoption, the judge pointed his finger at them and asked, *"Is anyone coercing you to adopt this little boy?"* They assured the judge that they were adopting out of love, their own free choice. The judge said, *"From today on, he is your son. He may disappoint you, even grieve you but he is your son. Everything you own one day will be his and he will bear your name."* Then he looked to the clerk and gave this command. *"So order a change in this child's birth certificate and may it reflect that these are the parents of this child."*

PP I began this series with this quote: *'the work of God is Trinitarian in every dimension.'* This was true in creation, and salvation, but in the spiritual adoption of every believer The moment of salvation, the new believer was adopted into the family of God, and as we unpack this truth, it can offer an amazing confidence to live this Christian life

PP 1-Adoption was the Father's Plan all along

Growing up in the ancient world was a defined process, even more than it is today
In Jewish culture in the ancient world-and this still happens today-the Sabbath following a boy's 13th birthday, he was taken to the synagogue for the very first time
In childhood, the father was responsible to oversee the Law of God to his son
But at 13, the son had become bar mitzvah, *bar* means son, *mitzvah* means commandment
He was now a son of the law, responsible to obey the law himself
In Greek culture, the son was under the father's care until his 18th birthday, when he then came under the care and authority of the state as a cadet for 2 years
Just before becoming a cadet, they would hold a festival where they would cut off the boy's long hair and offer it to the gods, as a rite of passage into adulthood
Roman culture didn't have a fixed age, but recognized adulthood between 14-17 years of age
The boy would turn in his robe for a Roman Toga, and they would hold a *liberalia*, where he would be taken to the Roman Forum and publicly introduced before witnesses as an adult

PP Paul borrowed from this analogy when he wrote ***"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways."*** **1 Corinthians 13:11**

Knowing this background, let's read verses **1-2**, ***"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."*** **3:1-2**

You might have the most incredibly wealthy parents, and live on a massive estate, and the rightful heir of it all one day, but until you are recognized as an adult, you take orders from the servants

You are in the position of a one-day owner, but you do not yet function as the owner
The boy was in the care of those whose job it was to guide him to adulthood, he was no different than a servant, in fact, taking orders from the servants, ***guardians*** and ***managers***
Guardians were those who watched over the child, and managers watched over his inheritance

They were in control and in charge and gave orders until the boy was an adult, until *‘the date set by the father’*, which was the privilege for the father in Rome

Paul borrowed from this custom to explain that before Christ came the Jews were under the law *“In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.” (4:3)*

This sounds strange at first, until we turn back to chapter 3, *“before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came...” Galatians 3:23-24*

The Law could not give new life, it revealed sin, preparing the way to faith in Christ
Just as a guardian prepared a child for adulthood, the law prepared people for Christ
It convinces the soul that they are morally bankrupt before God and in need of a Savior
Just as a manager guarded the estate and inheritance, the law preserved the people of God and the plan of God until the *‘date set by the heavenly Father’*

But the law could only guide the Jewish people, could only rein in the flesh, the sinful desires, as it had no power to produce the new life in anyone

But what was that *‘date set by the Father’*?

Verses 4-5 tell us: *“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”*

The Father sent the Son, the time was now, the time of the Law’s authority had come to an end and a new covenant of grace was inaugurated

The Galatian believers, Jews who believed in Christ, were being led astray by false teachers to come back under the authority of the law, which was bewildering to Paul who wrote this
They were forsaking grace, and going back to legalism, thinking that keeping the law could earn for them right standing with God

And the reason why he was so dumbfounded is at the end of **verse 5**: *“so that we might receive adoption as sons.”*

You are no longer a little child, one who is below the servant, you are adopted as sons
And even more astounding, you have been adopted as adult sons, given full rights to your inheritance, so why would you go back to the elementary principles of the law?

PP *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will” Ephesians 1:3-5*

Friends, there are two yardsticks in the NT to measure the love of God: *the cross and adoption*

PP *“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” 1 John 3:1*

We have become the adult children of God through what the Bible calls adoption

Adoption is God the Father’s plan to bring people into His family...but the Son makes it possible

PP 2-Adoption is the Son’s Purpose for Dying

God has only one natural Son, Jesus, all the rest of His children He has adopted!

Parents might have a child accidentally, but no one adopts by accident or chance
 It is a deliberate act of choice because they want that child to belong to their family
 In Rome, in New Testament times, a father had absolute power over his family
 In Rome, when a child was born, he/she was placed at the father's feet, and if the father stooped
 and lifted the child, that meant he acknowledged the child and wanted to keep the child
 If he turned and walked away, he was refusing the child and literally he/she was thrown out and
 left in the Roman forum, to become the property of anyone who cared to pick them up
 But these babies usually met one of three fates: death, slavery, or prostitution
 Adoption did occur in Rome during NT times, but it was commonly the childless well to do
 parents who would adopt, and not babies or young children
 They adopted young adults who had shown themselves fit to work well and worthy to carry on
 the family business and name
 It was the early church that began to adopt babies, because they understood spiritual adoption

PP Tony Merida said, *"The doctrine of adoption is at the heart of the gospel. Adoption was never plan B; it has always been plan A. It existed before the world existed."*¹

God justifies sinners through Christ, giving them right standing before Him
 He makes them new creations full of new life and He adopts them into His family as adult sons
 and daughters set free in His family
 And He did all this through Jesus His Son: ***"God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons."*** Galatians 4:4-5

Jesus redeemed us from the guardian and manager of the law, ***'so that we might receive adoption as sons.'*** 4:5

Adoption was the great goal of the Father, and He sent the Son to accomplish it
 Every single human being is born belonging to this world, not to the family of God
 In other words, God is not the Father of every human being which Paul said earlier in Galatians,
"for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith." 3:26

A person must be brought into the family of God and He does this the redemption of the Son
PP *"consider that every sin you commit is an act of rebellion against the sovereign authority of God, or, as someone has said, an act of cosmic treason. So here we sit on death row, condemned as rebels, awaiting our execution. But instead of the death we deserve, we are made sons and daughters of the very King we have rebelled against. Instead of death, we get eternal life. Instead of wrath, we receive favor. Instead of eternal ruin, we are made heirs of God and coheirs with Christ. All this happened without our doing a single thing to earn the King's favor, or any attempt on our part to make restitution for our rebellion. His Son has done it all for us."*²

Jerry Bridges

Christian, you are a son or daughter of the heavenly Father, a brother or sister of the Son, and
 you have been made a co-heir with Jesus
 But as mind-blowing as the position of an adopted child is, living that out takes the Holy Spirit

PP 3-Adoption is the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts

¹ Merida and Morton, Orphanology: Awakening to Gospel-Centered Adoption and Orphan Care, p. 71

² The Gospel for Real Life, Bridges

Christian brothers and sisters, God has sent the Holy Spirit to us for exactly this purpose and we see it in verse 6, our Holy Ghost sighting for today:

“And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Galatians 4:6

The word ‘*Abba*’ is the Hebrew word for Father, followed immediately by the Greek word *pater*, which in English is ‘*Father*’

Paul is telling both Jew and Gentile, in both Hebrew and Greek languages, the Spirit is helping us ring out in our hearts, *We have a Father and we are His sons and daughters*

God planned it, the Son accomplished it, and the Spirit is working to help us realize it

We are adopted as sons and daughters, we belong to the family of God!

The Spirit of God is not aiming to fill us with a spiritual high, rather with spiritual confidence! He is working to help us realize, and be empowered by our adoption

PP He ***“himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God”*** **Romans 8:16**

He’s telling you stop speaking of yourself in self-disparaging ways, you are a child of the King

He’s convincing you you’re always invited into the presence of your heavenly Father

He’s telling you that you do not need to fear your Father, He loves you the way He loves Jesus

He is assuring us we are God’s children, who have a vast inheritance ahead of us, helping us long for that eternal life where we will be together with God and our spiritual family

But belonging to God’s family carries responsibilities as well, to bring honor to our Father and our brothers and sisters

We have told our children many times, we don’t hit and hurt each other

That of all people, we should love each other most

Many times I have told them when they were young, *Ackleys don’t do that!!*

Their actions, good and bad, reflect on and give honor or take away that of Denise and me

Many parents teach their children to behave in a way that will bring honor to their family name

It’s the same in God’s family, as the Spirit reminds us who we are as sons and daughters who are to live in such a way as to bring honor to God, rather than take it away

Friends, the Father signed the adoption papers, the Son paid the adoption price in His blood, and the Spirit is raising us as the children of God

PP The Holy Spirit is the One Who works in us as ***“we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”*** **Romans 8:23**

Illus Many years ago, before electronic transactions, a poor pastor received a financial gift in the mail from a wealthy person. The benefactor wanted to give a large amount but didn’t trust the mail system, so he gave a small amount with a letter that simply said, ‘More to follow’. In a few days, the pastor received the same amount again, and again with a letter that read ‘More to follow’. A few days later, the same thing, and on and on until the benefactor had sent the entire amount

There was a wonderful custom in Rome, when it came to adoption

First, there was a private ceremony at which the person was purchased for adoption

Then, there was a public ceremony at which the adoption was declared before witnesses

On that day all the inheritance and responsibility was given to that new family member

Christian, you have been purchased by Christ and the Spirit of God dwells within you

But there is a public declaration that awaits you at the return of Christ, when we will enter into glory and be given our full inheritance to enjoy forever!

Christian, your best is yet to come!!

“So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.” 4:7

Until that day comes, the Spirit is helping us understand more and more the blessings of adoption

Amen?

Pray