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Galatians 4:4-7
December 31, 2017

My big sister and her husband have a fertility problem. They have been married for seven years and tried their best to have children but they couldn't. When they lived in Gaza, they wanted to adopt a child. According to the law in Gaza, a Christian couple can only adopt a child born to a Christian mother, as a child from another religion will not be given to a Christian family for adoption. Islamic law does not allow adoption but allows for "guardianship." Now my sister and her husband live in Belgium, and it is easier for them to pursue adoption. Adoption in the United States is costly. So, it is not easy to adopt a child. Unlike the Islamic law in Palestine where adopted child does not enjoy the full right of the biological child in the family, in the United States, an adopted child can legally become a permanent member of a new family and has equal privilege to a biological child.

Adoption, according to the apostle Paul, grants adopted and biological children the same rights. According to Paul, adoption does not need to be through adoption agency, but only through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Adoption through Jesus Christ is not expensive at all that because Jesus Christ has paid the cost of our adoption.

It is fascinating to read the Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians talking about adoption and the evangelist Luke tells the story of presenting Jesus in the temple. The Apostle Paul talks about the incarnation of the Son of God. He emphasizes that the Son of God was born of a woman, which means that Jesus was fully human being. Paul also indicates that Jesus was born under the law to

point to Jesus' Jewish lineage. The evangelist Luke presents Mary and Joseph as Jews who are faithful to the law. They circumcised Jesus on the eighth day and offered sacrifices like two turtledoves or pigeons.

Paul explains the reason behind the incarnation of the Son of God. Jesus Christ became a human being to redeem us so that we might receive adoption as children. The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible describes us as "children." Children is an inclusive term for both male and female. But the original Greek text means "And because you are children (*huioi* = **sons**), God has sent the Spirit of his Son (*huios*) into our hearts, crying 'Abba! Father!'" (4:6). Paul is using masculine language to describe the Jewish culture of his time where sons inherited their fathers. Paul does not intend to exclude women but he tries to explain our new status using familiar language. In the same letter to the Galatians, Paul redefines the concept of "sonship" in the light of baptism.

²⁷ As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.²⁸ There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.²⁹ And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:27-29).

On account of our baptism, "the benefits of "sonship" were now extended to all genders and socio-economic statuses, women, men, children, and even slaves.¹ Through Jesus Christ, we become heirs not on the basis of gender, but on the basis of belonging to God.

¹ John Frederick, "Commentary on Galatians 4:4-7." Working Preacher, December 2012. https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3521 (Accessed December 29, 2017).

The apostle Paul was writing to “Gentile believers who are being persuaded that they need to adopt circumcision and law observance in order to be fully included in God's people.² Paul teaches the Galatians that Jesus was born under the law to redeem them. They do not need to observe the law or adopt circumcision. Circumcision is a sign of the Jewish belonging to the covenant of God, and now baptism is a sign of the Gentiles belonging to God.

Jesus Christ makes us children of God and for this reason, according to the apostle Paul, we can cry, “Abba! Father!” We are able to call God using this same intimate language that Jesus used when he prayed in the garden, “He said, “Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want” (Mark 14:36). “The word Abba is an Aramaic word...used by children for their father, something like ‘daddy’ or ‘papa’ today.”³ It is a term expressing warm affection and confidence between children and their father. Having this intimacy with God through Jesus Christ has elevated our status from slaves to the law and sin to become adopted children and heirs.

As you think about 2018 and your goals for the New Year, consider to reflect on your status as a child of God. You are invited to live your life as a child of God not as a slave to sin. You are free from slavery to sin; so, live your life as a free person. Ask yourself what makes you a slave not a child of God. You can be enslaved to drugs, abusive relationship, work or social media. It might be something else. Reflect on your life and try this year to free yourself through God’s grace

² Elisabeth Johnson, “Commentary on Galatians 4:4-7,” Working Preacher, January, 2012, https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1128 (accessed December 29, 2017).

³ The High Calling, “Calling God “Abba, Father”,” The High Calling, <https://www.theologyofwork.org/the-high-calling/daily-reflection/calling-god-abba-father-1> (accessed December 29, 2017).

from anything that makes you bondage to sin. As a child of God and heir, Christ is inviting you to live a victorious Christian life. You are called to live a life as an honorable Christian person who rejects sin, slavery, and the desires of the flesh and seek to reflect the glory of God.