

Lesson 5: Gospel and Heart (Bringing Adoption Alive)

Key concept
Bringing adoption
alive

Objective:

- *Understand your adoption
- *Experience your adoption
- *Live out your adoption

BRINGING ADOPTION ALIVE: SON OR SLAVE PROJECT

Introduction

Galatians 4:5-9 tells us the following truths:

1) When we became Christians, we "*receive[d] the adoption [lit. the sonship],*" Galatians 4:4-5. We became sons of God.

2) Before we were "slaves," but that is true no longer. "*So you are no longer a slave, but a son,*" Galatians 4:7.

3) Nevertheless, it is possible, even if you are a Christian, to return to some degree of slavery, and to lose our "sonship consciousness."

"Formerly...you were slaves... do you wish to be enslaved...all over again?"

Galatians 4:8,9. As stated in Romans 8:15, "*you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear.*" – thus, illustrating that it is possible to fall back into fear/slavery though we are in fact children of God.

Therefore, the two fundamentally different ways to live are not as religious or as irreligious, but:

a) as a slave, full of fear, or b) as a child of God, full of faith working through love.

There is a two-part "dynamic" to Christian growth. It is, in a sense, a "combustion cycle." If it is ignited and going in the heart it results in dynamic character growth. The two aforementioned parts are a "negative" and a "positive." We see them mentioned many places:

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Positive

Negative

<p><u>Colossians 3:</u> v.1- Set your hearts on things above...</p>	<p>v.5- Put to death what belongs to your earthly nature... which is idolatry.</p>
<p><u>Hebrews 12:</u> v:2- Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...sat down at the right hand of God...</p>	<p>v. 1- Let us throw off every-thing that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles...</p>
<p><u>Romans 8:</u> v.5- ... their minds set on what, the Spirit desires.(v.14) those who are led by the Spirit of the God are sons of God.</p>	<p>v.13- ... by the Spirit, you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live...</p>
<p><u>Galatians 5:</u> v. 25- since we live by the spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit</p>	<p>v. 24- those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires</p>

The "negative" side is repentance - to discover the particular idolatries of the heart (Col.3:5), our besetting sins (Heb.12:1), and uproot them at the motivational level (Rom-5:13). The "positive" side is faith - to see ourselves as perfect in Christ (Col.3:1), who has done from first to last all that was required for our acceptance (Heb-12:2), so that we could be adopted as sons and daughters of God (Rom.8:14). This is the dynamic: a) we uproot the idols of the heart, and b) we live out of our identity as children of God.

These two elements really are flip sides of each other. As we begin with one, we find that we always pass over into doing the other, as well. Each stimulates the other; if either one is de-emphasized, it robs the other also of any power. How? On the one hand, without a knowledge of our extreme sin and idolatry, the payment of Christ on the cross seems trivial, and the message of it does not electrify or transform. On the other hand, without a knowledge of our complete acceptance and adoption through Christ, the message of our sin would so crush us that we would deny or repress it. But, the more you know of his, infallible fatherly love, the more you are able to realistically face yourself, your flaws and faults; and the more you see your sin, the more precious and valuable do you find his saving love and grace.

In this week's project, we will look at how to live as a child of God.

PART I: UNDERSTANDING OUR ADOPTION

A. The importance of adoption.

“The notion that we are children of God, His own sons and daughters...is the main spring of Christian living... Our sonship to God is the apex of Creation and the goal of redemption,” *Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God.*

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"If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. [Adoption] is the highest privilege the gospel offers...that justification, by which we mean God's forgiveness of the past together with his acceptance of the future, is the primary and fundamental blessing is not in question... But...adoption is higher, because of the richer relationship with God that it involves," J.I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19.

"According to the Scriptures, pardon, acceptance, and adoption are distinct privileges, the one rising above the other in the order in which they have been stated...while the first two properly belong to (the sinner's) justification, as being both founded on the same relation [with God] as a Ruler-and-Subject, the third is radically distinct from them, as being founded on a nearer... more tender, more endearing relation [with God] as Father-and-child... The privilege of adoption presupposes pardon and acceptance, but is higher than either...," James Buchanan, The Doctrine of Justification.

B. Objections to and distortions of adoption.

"I have heard it seriously argued that the thought of divine fatherhood can mean nothing to those whose human father was inadequate, lacking wisdom, affection or both, nor to those many more whose misfortune it was to have a fatherless upbringing... But this is silly. For it is just not true to suggest that in the realm of personal relations, positive concepts cannot be formed by contrast... The truth is that all of us have a positive ideal of fatherhood by which we judge our own and others' fathers [how else could we be unhappy with our bad fathers?], and it can safely be said that the person for whom the thought of God's perfect fatherhood is meaningless or repellant does not exist," J. I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19.

"In the sense that God is the Creator all things, it is true that the Bible sometimes speaks of His Fatherhood. He is the 'Father of the heavenly lights' (James 1:17) and the One who brought the universe to birth. But that is not the most common use... We are not, by nature, children of God. We need to become his children... In fact, by nature, we are children of wrath, not children of God" (Ephesians 2:3)," Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God.

"The idea that all are children of God is not found in the Bible anywhere...The gift of sonship to God becomes ours not through being born, but through being born again. To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or of a husband's will, but born of God' (Jn. 1:12-13). Sonship to God, then, is a gift of grace. It is not a natural but an adoptive sonship, and so the New Testament explicitly pictures it," J.I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19.

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C. Adoption defined.

"Adoption is not a change in nature, but a change in status. If we fail to see this truth, we will reject the power of our adoption... Adoption is a declaration God makes about us. It is irreversible, dependent entirely upon His gracious choice, in which He says: 'You are my son, today I have brought you into my family,'" Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God.

"All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption: by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privilege of the children of God; have His name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption; have access to the throne of grace with boldness; are enabled to cry, Abba, Father; are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him, as by a father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation," Westminster Confession, chap 12.

"The profound truth of Roman adoption was that the adoptee was taken out of his previous state and placed in a new relationship of son to his new father... All his old debts are cancelled, and in effect the adoptee started a new life as part of his new family...[On the one hand, the new father] owned all the [new offspring's] property, controlled his personal relationships, and had the rights of discipline. On the other hand, the father was liable for the actions of the adoptee, and each owed the other reciprocal duties of support and maintenance," Francis Lyall, Slaves, Citizens, and Sons.

"In Roman law, it was a recognized practice for an adult who wanted an heir, and someone to carry on the family name, to adopt a male as his Son... The apostles proclaim that God has so loved those whom he redeemed on the cross that he has adopted them all as his heirs, to see and share the glory into which his only begotten Son has already come. 'God sent his Son...to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights as sons.' (Gal. 4:4-5): we, that is, who were 'foreordained to adoption as sons...' (Eph.1:5). 'How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!...When he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is'" (1 Jn. 3:1-2). Excerpt from J. I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19.

D. Biblical theology of adoption.

"God and religion are not less than they were; the old Testament revelation of the holiness of God, and its demand for humility in man, is presupposed throughout, but something has been added. A new factor has come in the New Testament believers to deal with God as their Father," J.I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19.

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“According to our Lord’s own testimony in John’s Gospel, God’s fatherly relation to him implied four things. [1] First, fatherhood implied authority. The Father commands and disposes; the initiative which he calls his Son to exercise is the initiative of resolute obedience to his Father’s will... (6:38; 17:4; 5:19; 4:34). [2] Second, fatherhood implies affection. The Father loves the Son.’ The Father hath loved me...’ (5:20; 15: 9-10). [3] Third, fatherhood implied fellowship. ‘ I am not alone, for my Father is with me.’ The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone...’ (16:32; 8:29). [4] Fourth, fatherhood implied honor. God wills to exalt his Son. ‘ Father...Glorify your Son.’ The Father...has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son...’ (17: 1; 5:22-23). All this extends to his adopted children. In, through, and under Jesus Christ their lord, they are ruled, loved, accompanied, and honored by their heavenly Father... “Father..let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father. I want those you have given me to be with me where I am...” (17:23-24), J.I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19.

PART II: EXPERIENCING OUR ADOPTION

A. The status Christians do have

"God sent his son...to redeem those under the law that we might receive the adoption (lit. the sonship)," Galatians 4:4-5.

B. The experience Christians can have.

“Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!,” Galatians 4:6. You did not receive the spirit of slavery again to fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry ‘Abba! Father!,’ it is the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits that we are children of God," Romans 8:15-16.

C. What is the experience of sonship?

"[We all have a native] inability to believe that salvation is entirely of God’s grace and love... We are slow to realize the implications of that. We are sons, but we are in danger of having the mindset of hired servants. Furthermore, if there is nothing else the Devil can do to mar our joy in Christ, he will try to produce in us what our forefathers used to call a ‘bondage frame of spirit’... That is why he sends us the Spirit of adoption.

What is [that]? Paul says, 'You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father," Rom. 8:15-16.

...Paul is referring to the Holy Spirit...[which] brings us into a deep-seated persuasion that we really are the sons of God. If it is a fact that... God has adopted us into his family, then the Spirit assures us this is true, and enables us to live in the enjoyment of such a rich spiritual blessing... He sends his Spirit into our hearts, bringing us the deep spiritual and psychological security that rests on the objective fact that our sins are forgiven and we belong to the Lord," Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God.

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“‘Abba’ was the word that was used familiarly by children talking to their fathers...A child does not always address his father as ‘father;’ he uses terms such as ‘Papa’, ‘Dad.’ That is the kind of meaning represented by this word ‘Abba’. It was a...word lisped by a little child...But let us notice the word ‘cry’...we cry ‘Abba, Father’. It is a very strong word, and clearly the Apostle has used it quite deliberately. It means a loud cry... it expresses deep emotion... What then does it imply? Obviously...real knowledge of God. God is no longer to us a distant God. He is not merely a God in whom we believe intellectually, theologically, theoretically, doctrinally only. All this is possible to one who is not a child of God at all...[Our] worship and praying are spontaneous; it is the spontaneity of the child who sees the father...and not only spontaneity, but confidence. "A little child has confidence. He does not analyze it...he knows that ‘Abba’ is his father. Grown-ups may be standing back at a distance and being very formal [with some great personage]; but the little child comes running in, rushes right in, and holds on, to his fathers legs. He has a right that no-one else has...It is instinctive...we cry ‘Abba, Father," D.M. Lloyd-Jones, Romans 8:5-17.

“Let me remind you of how Thomas Goodwin...states the matter... He pictures a man walking along a road with his little boy, holding hands-- father and son, son and father. The little boy knows that the man is his father, and that his father loves him. But suddenly the father stops, picks up the boy, lifts him up into his arms, embraces him and kisses him... The boy is no more a son when he is being embraced than he was before. The father's action...has not changed the status of the boy, but oh! the difference in the enjoyment!... That is what is described in Romans 8:15...,” D.M. Lloyd-Jones, Romans 8:5-17, p.280.

“It is a manifestation of God unto the soul... It is a thing better felt than spoken of. It is no audible voice, but a ray of glory filling the soul... corresponding to that audible voice, 'O man, greatly beloved," (Dan.9:23)... ”(William Guthrie) "The Spirit does not always witness to our condition by force of argument from sanctification, but sometimes immediately by way of presence: as the sight of a friend comforts without help of discourse..."(Richard Sibbes), D.M. Lloyd-Jones, Romans 8:5-17.

D. An example of the experience ("spirit") of sonship.

The problem: "Because I did not believe God loved me on the basis of Christ's life, death, and resurrection—

The result: [therefore] I could not face the risk of seeing my sins as my own responsibility. So, having tried to clear my conscience by blaming others, I turned on the afterburners and made myself busy with work and duty. Or to use Luther's analogy, I was full of active righteousness. I looked to my outward activity to feel good about myself, and judged others by my own active standards...

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The turning: But now I understood what Luther was talking about: 'in the righteousness of faith we work nothing, we render nothing to God, but we only receive and allow another to work in us.' This is what he called a "passive righteousness", a righteousness that is credited to our account through faith. This was Christ's righteousness, bought with the price of his blood on the cross. This I received by faith. The reason it had been so difficult for me to have a personal faith in Christ was that I had not experienced total forgiveness. But I had now brought real sins- including my attitudes of self-dependence and blame-shifting, to a real Savior, and they had been forgiven... How awesome it is to be loved unconditionally by a holy, righteous God, Rose M. Miller, From Fear to Freedom.

PART III: LIVING OUT OUR ADOPTION

To live "by faith" is not a general "positive attitude," but a deliberate attempt to fire the heart with a knowledge of who we are in Christ and to live consistently with that. "Sonship, [therefore] must be the controlling thought, the normative category, if you like, at every point" (J.I. Packer). Here are all the responsibilities or duties of the Christian life recast and understood in terms of sonship:

A. Responsibilities of adopted children:

1. New motivation.

"If the love of a father will not make a child delight in him, what will?" John Owen, Communion with God.

"A perfect man would never act from sense of duty, he'd always want the right thing more than the wrong one. Duty is only a substitute for love (of God and of other people) like a crutch which is a substitute for a [healthy] leg. Most of us need the crutch at times; but of course it is idiotic to use the crutch when our own legs (our own loves, tastes, habits, etc.) can do the journey on their own." -- C.S. Lewis Letters 18 July 1957

2. Obedience.

"[The Sermon on the Mount] teaches Christian conduct not by giving a full scheme of rules and a detailed conduct, to be followed with mechanical precision, but by indicating a broad and general way the spirit, direction and objectives, the guiding principles and ideals, by which the Christian must steer his course. It is often noted that this is... quite different from the tax-consultant type of instruction which was the stock-in-trade of Jewish lawyers and scribes in our Lord's day. What is less often noticed is that it is precisely the kind of moral instruction that parents are constantly trying to give their children--concrete, imaginative, teaching general principles from particular instances, and seeking all the time to bring the children-to appreciate and share the parents own attitudes and view of life....The all-embracing principles of conduct: [1] imitating the Father... (Mt. 5:44-45,48)...[2] glorifying the Father [bringing him honor and credit before others] (Mt. 5:16; 6:9)...[3] pleasing the Father... (Mt.6:1), J.I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19.

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3. Family resemblance.

"'Gospel holiness'... was Puritan shorthand for authentic Christian living springing from love and gratitude to God, in contrast with the spurious 'legal holiness' that consisted merely of forms, routines and outward appearances, maintained from self-regarding motives...[Gospel holiness] is simply a matter of a child of God being true to type, [resembling the Father]... expressing one's adoption in one's life... while it is certainly true that justification frees one forever from the need to keep the law as a means of earning life, it is equally true that adoption obliges us to keep the law as the means of pleasing one's newfound Father. Law-keeping [is transformed now, it is] the family likeness of God's children...[Now] the sins of God's children do not destroy their justification or nullify their adoption, but they mar the children's fellowship with [and their family likeness to] the Father..." J.I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19.

4. Trust.

"All Christians are, in fact, called to a life of faith, in the sense of following God's will at whatever cost and trusting him for the consequences. But all are tempted to put status and security, in human terms, before loyalty to God; and then, if they resist that temptation, they are at once tempted to worry about the likely effect of their stand... On those thus tempted in the life of faith, Jesus brings the truth of their adoption to bear....' Do not worry about your life ...your heavenly Father knows what you need...' (Mt.6:31-33).

5. Acceptance of discipline.

"In this world, royal children have to undergo extra training and discipline which other children escape, in order to fit them for their high destiny. It is the same with the children of the King of kings. The clue to understanding all his dealings with them is to remember that throughout their lives he is training them for what awaits them, and chiseling them into the image of Christ," J.I. Packer, Knowing God, chap 19.

"Faith and presumption look alike because both qualities are characterized by confidence, but faith begins in the recognition and acceptance of our total human weakness... Presumption... is a reliance on human moral abilities and religious accomplishments... A mix of presumption and faith produces a personal instability that surfaces in crises and major life transitions... Presumptive faith must have positive circumstances and feelings of success based on visible accomplishments. So when God wants to reach us, he must take away those favorable circumstances and accomplishments. He hits hard at our false trusts, [false 'righteousnesses,' things we get our strength from looking at]... Like the orphan we cry, 'I am abandoned' when in fact God's grace is pursuing us ever more intensely... [In sum,] presumptive self-trust prevails [in so many lives]. You can detect this attitude in yourself by your response to life when it goes out of control. If you handle it by blaming others, refusing to learn from God, becoming defensive and angry, you have the self trust of an orphan, not the faith of son or daughter," Rose M. Miller, From Fear to Freedom.

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B. Privileges of adopted children:

Here are all the privileges or blessings of the Christian life recast and understood in terms of sonship:

1. Assurance

"Social experts drum into us these days that the family unit needs to be stable and secure, and that any unsteadiness in the parent-child relationship takes its toll in strain, neurosis and arrested development in the child himself. The depressions, randomness and immaturities that mark children of broken homes are known to us all. But... in God's family... you have absolute stability and security. The very concept of adoption is itself proof and guarantee of the preservation of the saints, for only bad fathers throw their children out of the family, even under provocation..." J.I. Packer, Knowing God, Chap 19.

"Although [the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15] is probably the best known and loved of all Christ's parables, the lesson it teaches us...is often overlooked. Jesus was underlining the fact that... The reality of the love of God for us is often the last thing in the world to dawn on us. As we fix our eyes upon ourselves, our past failures, our present guilt, it seems impossible that the Father should love us. Many Christians go through much of their life with the prodigal's suspicion. Their concentration is upon their sin and failure; all their thoughts are introspective. That is why in the Greek text John's statement about the Father's love begins...Behold!, look and see. ["Behold, what manner of love the Father has given unto us, that we should be called children of God!" I John 3:11], Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God.

2. Prayer and intimacy

"'Abba' was the word that was used familiarly by children talking to their fathers... A child does not always address his father as 'father;' he uses terms such as 'Papa, ' Dad.' That is the kind of meaning represented by this word 'Abba.' It was a...word lisped by a little child... But let us notice the word cry...we cry 'Abba, Father.' It is a very strong word, and clearly the Apostle has used it quite deliberately. It means a loud cry... it expresses deep emotion... What then does it imply? Obviously...real knowledge of God. God is no longer to us a distant God. He is not merely a God in whom we believe intellectually, theologically, theoretically, doctrinally only. All this is possible to one who is not a child of God at all... [Our] worship and praying are spontaneous; it is the spontaneity of the child who sees the father...and not only spontaneity, but confidence. "A little child has confidence. He does not analyze it... he knows that 'Abba' is his father. Grown-ups may be standing back at a distance and being very formal [with some great personage]; but the little child comes running in, rushes right in, and holds on to his father's legs. He has a right that no-one else has... It is instinctive... we cry 'Abba Father," D.M. Lloyd Jones, Romans 8:5-17.

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“This is what prayer really means: knowing that we have a secure relationship with God in which we can address him in the knowledge that he cares, and has the power to aid us. Jesus encourages us to pray simply. This distinguishes the child of God from the hypocrite. The hypocrite is so unsure of his relationship with God (and rightly so!) that he thinks of prayer in terms of its length and eloquence; the child of God knows he is speaking to the Father, and talks simply and directly... Jesus also encourages us to pray boldly... Boldness [Which is] impudence in a neighbor is the privilege of the children of the family.” Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God.

3. Freedom and confidence

“The parable of the prodigal son epitomizes the disposition of some Christians, even when they are restored to fellowship with God. Lurking in their hearts there often remains this sneaking suspicion: ‘I am not worthy to be God’s son, but perhaps I can struggle through as one of his hired servants’ [see Luke 15:19]. At the root of such thinking is an inability to believe that salvation is entirely of God’s grace and love. We contribute nothing to it; we can do nothing to earn it in any way. We are often slow to realize the implications of that. We are sons, but we are [always] in danger of having the mindset of hired servants...the Devil... will try to produce in us what our forefathers called ‘a bondage frame of spirit’...[When Paul says in Romans 8:15 that God sends us ‘a Spirit of sonship’ rather than a spirit of fear, he means] God sends His Spirit into our hearts, bringing us the deep spiritual and psychological security that rests on the objective fact that... we belong to the Lord,” Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God.

4. Fellowship and connection

"We are to learn to accept and appreciate one another, no matter what natural differences might separate us... Rich and poor alike are to be treated as brothers...[We are to never give up on one another, to both confront and forgive in proportions as great as required.] Such a mixture of discipline and forgiveness is conceivable only within a family context... No family finds failure easy to handle...[But] only when we realize that the Church is a family, that we are brothers and sisters in that family, will we have a right perspective from which to view those who fail badly, and a right motive to see them disciplined faithfully, and welcomed back with many reaffirmations of our love... These are all part of what it means to ‘keep on loving each other as brothers’ (Heb. 13:1). Excerpt from Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God.

5. Inheritance

"Adoption is incomplete in this world. John says that...we are God's children, but it does "not yet appear what we shall be" in the future... (1 John 3:1-3). Similarly, Paul teaches that although we have already received the Spirit of adoption...(Romans 8:15), we are still waiting for the full experience of our sonship, for ‘the glorious freedom of the children of God’ (Romans 8:21). The redemption of our bodies, our adoption in all its glory, takes place at the final resurrection. Then... the image [family resemblance] now under repair will be completed," Sinclair Ferguson, Children of the Living God.

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“The doctrine of our adoption tells us that the sum and substance of our promised inheritance is a share in the glory of Christ. We shall be made like our elder brother at every point, and sin and mortality, the double corruption of God’s good work in the moral and spiritual spheres respectively, will be things of the past. ‘Co-heirs with Christ...that we may also share in his glory’ (Rom.8:17). ‘Now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him’ (1 Jn.3:2),” J.I.Packer, Knowing God, chap 19

SUM: WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A "SLAVE" AND A "SON"?

Both Galatians 4:1-7 and Romans 8:15-16 contrast slavery with sonship.

Different understanding

Slave – False definitions—a whole different religion

Child – True definitions

Slave: "Grace" is God's maintaining your strength and power so to live a better life.

Child: Grace is a transforming power, to be melted by spiritual understandings of gospel truth.

Slave: "Faith" is trying hard to do good and be better, establishing your own record (a 'righteousness') so God and others will accept you.

Child: Faith is a discipline of remembering and living every moment as an accepted child of God.

Slave: "Obedience" focuses nearly completely on external duties.

Examination of attitudes and motivations is too traumatic and is ignored.

Child: Obedience is seeking to please God first in our attitude of love, then in obeying his will. Concentration on principles and attitudes.

Different Lifestyle

Slave - Fear-based life

Child - Faith working through love

Slave: Compulsive obedience. Obeys God and moral codes out of fear of rejection--a compulsive, driven moralism. "Driveness". Unrealistic goals. Often a lot of self-criticism.

Child: Obeys out of joy in your Father and out of gratitude for the certainty of his love. "How can I live so ungratefully to one who will never reject me?"

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Slave: Controlled by people. Expectations and opinions of others become the real moral standard. We are controlled by what people think.

Child: Integrity and courage is easier. "The only person whose opinion counts is my Father! Who cares what the rest think?"

Slave: Hiding. Lots of strategies to hide our inner and outer failings from one another and ourselves. Including: gossip, blame-shifting, anger at other races/classes, obsessions, overwork, etc.

Child: Open and transparent. Freedom from having to put up a front. Able to appreciate people who are different and hurting.

Slave: Isolation. Growing feeling that no one understands, that no one cares, no one can be trusted.

Child: Because of openness and transparency, and a lack of self-pity.

Slave: Despair in troubles. Sees difficulties as "pay backs" from God. Result is either guilt (because there's an awareness of moral failure) or bitterness (because there's a feeling of moral accomplishment).

Child: Learns to see discipline as fatherly, loving instruction, preparing us for future tests. Learns lessons and shows patience.

Slave: Begrudging repentance. Admitting failure is destructive of one's very basis for living (that being a sense of moral adequacy). So repentance is galling, last resort.

Child: Admitting failures is the basis of a Christian's self-image as adopted child. Repentance reminds anew of magnitude of his love. Repentance quick, willing.

APPLICATION

A. Recognizing myself.

Read over the "summary" of the slave-vs.-child mentality.

1. Which of the characteristics of a "slave" (a person still functioning as if they are "under the law") are strongest in you?
2. Are you (a) partially (b) half-way, or (c) primarily operating out of a fear-based/slave mentality? (This is subjective, of course, but these are the only three options!)

B. Turning the corner:

Read R. M. Miller's personal account above in Part I.E. Though she was a professing Christian, she had been basing her self-image and sense of acceptance with God on her goodness and moral efforts. As a result, she was always confessing sins such as anger or worry or lack of self-control. But she "turned" the corner to living life as an adopted child when she repented for "real sins," self-dependence. She saw that her remaining sin was seeking to earn her own salvation, which led to all her other problems: guilt, defensiveness, bitterness over disappointments in life, self-consciousness.

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Case study - Here one pastor, Pastor John Newton, writes to another pastor who is depressed because of his feeling of guilt over his sins. But the writer points out that he has not ever confessed his real sins, the sins of self-justification:

"[You say you feel overwhelmed with guilt and a sense of unworthiness. Well,] you cannot be too aware of the inward and inbred evils you complain of, but you may be (indeed you are) improperly controlled and affected by them. You say it is hard to understand how a holy God could accept such an awful person as yourself. You, then, express not only a low opinion of yourself (which is right!) but also too low an opinion of the person, work, and promises of the Redeemer, which is wrong... You complain about sin, but when we examine your complaints, they are so full of self-righteousness, unbelief, pride, and impatience that they are little better than the worst evils you complain of!"

1. List two or three of your significant besetting sins, character flaws, attitudes, self-control problems.

2. How do they stem from a failure to grasp that you are an adopted child of God? (Put another way:) how are they fed and motivated by a desire to justify yourself instead of accepting Christ's free righteousness?

[Note: ask yourself, "what do I feel I have to have for a sense of self-worth and self-acceptance. E.g. If you are angry, what goal is being blocked? If you are anxious, what goal is being blocked? How do those goals substitute for the Father's free love? Etc.]

3. Have you "turned" the corner from the slave-mentality to living as a son or daughter of God? Most believers do not start out the Christian life in this understanding, but have to come into it. Have you? Pray if you have not along these lines:

"Lord, show me the difference between self justification and real faith. Help me to see the false trusts that keep me feeling like a hired servant with you. Let the cross and your Fatherly love become a living daily reality in my life. Amen."

C. Walking daily as children of God.

Individual sinful acts have sinful motivations. When we ask why we are moved to particular sins, we discover that our sins come because we still seek to find our "justification" (our identity, our sense of worthiness) in other things. Thus, to remember that we are completely loved and righteous in Christ undermines and saps our motives and desires for sin.

Lesson 5:
Gospel and Heart

NOTES

NORMAL ACTIVITY:
GOING OUT OF YOUR WAY TO HELP
WITH A PROJECT

Slave motivation
"Do this because, if you succeed, you
me."
will know you are not a bum!"

"Do this because then somebody will love
my
you, and you are nobody till somebody
does."

Results:
If no gratitude expressed--anger:
disappointment

Even if gratitude expressed a sense
of being owed--controlling.

If life goes badly, increased self-pity
have
and bitterness toward God--"after all,
deserve.
look how good I am to people! How
some
could God treat me like this?"

How to engage in "normal activities" as a child of God?

---Recognize that ordinarily both motives are present. (But your fear, pride, anxiety, hurt feelings, anger will be a good indicator of a high level of 'works' motivation present.) There is no way for motives to be totally pure. The goal is to continually refine them.

---As you do "normal activities", identify the motives of the sin-nature (the "under the law" nature). Repent of them. E.g. "Father, I see how much I do this out of a hungry desire to steal self-acceptance from the applause of others. That trivializes your unwavering love for me in Christ. Forgive and cleanse me from these motives, which rise from the habits of my old life."

---Now articulate the motives of the Spirit-nature. Say them to yourself as you proceed through the activity. Constantly reinforce "adopted-child" motives. E.g. "Father, I do this for you, not for the success it might bring me. I don't need that, nor am I worried that much about failure, for your recognition is all I need. Oh let my heart feel totally what I just said to you!" [Keep up daily devotions, looking for ideas and verses in the Bible that the Spirit makes "radioactive" to you, truths about our standing in Christ that he makes vivid and engaging to your heart. Then use those radioactive verses to yourself as part of articulating adopted child motives.]

NORMAL ACTIVITY:
GOING OUT OF YOUR WAY TO HELP
WITH A PROJECT

Sonship motivation
"Do this because Christ sacrificed for

"Do this because it will please both
Father and the person I am helping."

Results:
If no gratitude expressed,
but gratitude not the motive

If gratitude expressed, new, non-
controlling relationship possible

If life goes badly, trust. "After all, I
already been given more than I
And besides, my Father must have
loving purpose.

**Lesson 5:
Gospel and Heart**

NOTES

1. List a project or activity or event to which often is attached anxiety or fear or displeasure or anger.
2. *Write in what goes on in your heart, and what should go on in your heart:*

Slave motivation

Sonship motivation

CONCLUSION

Every day, when we face the issues of life, we are to "call out" to God as our Father. That means, we are to consciously seek to live as children of God, not slaves. We are to think out: "Am I acting like a slave or like a child of God here?" Sometimes, if we seek patiently, the Spirit comes "alongside" us (Rom.8:16) and fills us with an awareness of his Fatherly love for us, and acting like a child of God comes naturally. Sometimes our sonship "experience" is low and we have to "gut it out" by faith. Either way, we are being changed into his likeness.

On the one hand, the gospel changes us because it changes our thinking, bringing it "in line with the truth". But on the other hand, the gospel changes us because it brings us into actual contact with the Father. It will not be enough to simply know that God accepts you freely in Christ, but you must actually experience that love shed in your heart through the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit helps us to "call out, 'Abba', Father" (Gal.4: 6), and unless we have this experience, we will continue to act as a slave (Gal.4: 7), whether to the duties of our role or the desires of our hearts (See "Centrality", Thesis 2). We therefore must learn to preach the gospel to ourselves (as in Gal.4.4-5), until it catches fire in our hearts and captures our imagination (as in Gal.4:6-7).

Thus Luther writes: "So learn to speak to one's heart and to the Law. When the law creeps into your conscience, learn to be a cunning logician--learn to use arguments of the gospel against it. Say: "O law!... trouble me not! For I will not allow you, so intolerable a tyrant and tormentor; to reign in my heart and conscience, for they are the seat and temple of Christ the Son of God, who is the King of righteousness and peace, and my most sweet savior and mediator." [Then] he shall keep my conscience joyful and quiet in the sound and pure doctrine of the Gospel through the knowledge of this passive and heavenly righteousness," (See section 5c). He calls this an effort to keep "this Christian righteousness reigning in my heart," (See section 5d).

**Lesson 5:
Gospel and Heart**

NOTES

Discussion Questions

LOOKING BACK (20 Min)

1. Discuss how you did on your goals from last week.
2. Discuss any progress you made in loving your neighbors on your 3x5 card.

LOOKING UP (40 Min)

1. Discuss the application questions that were given throughout the lesson.

LOOKING FORWARD (15 Min)

1. List one goal that you have for next week related to applying Lesson 5.
2. List one goal that you have to love one or more of your neighbors on your 3x5 card.
3. How do you need prayer this week?