

# Abba, Father - the Spirit of Adoption

by Michael Flowers

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*The sermon explores the roots of salvation in Abraham's covenant, the new exodus in Jesus Christ, and the spirit of adoption that brings us into a personal relationship with God.*

**Duration:** 25:15

**Scripture:** Genesis 15:6, Psalm 127:3, Isaiah 61:1, John 3:16, Romans 7:7, Galatians 3:19, Ephesians 6:12

**Topics:** "Adoption"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of being an heir and the role of the law as a temporary custodian for the nation of Israel. He explains that while an heir is underage, they are no different from a slave, even though they own the entire estate. The speaker then introduces the idea of the elementary spiritual forces of the world, which refers to the fallen creation and the period when Israel was under the law. He emphasizes that the law was a temporary measure until the time set by God, when He sent His Son to redeem those under the law and bring them into adoption as sons and daughters.

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## Transcript

Isn't that a beautiful sight? Children are a gift of the Lord, and blessed are those whose quiver is full of them. Sometimes we roll our eyes, right? More? Yes, more, Lord, more. Thank you.

You may be seated. I just felt like it's so important to read the entire chapter over us. It's just such an incredible passage in salvation history from old to new, as we've been saying that the new is in the old, the new covenant is in the old covenant concealed, and the old is in the new revealed.

St. Augustine says this, and so let me say that one more time. The new is in the old concealed. It's there, but we don't see it until the coming of Jesus.

And then we see, we read the old covenant completely through what we say Christologize, through the eyes of Christ. Those were types and shadows proclaiming what was to come. And that's what Paul is getting into in this somewhat complex argument to the Galatians.

Paul has been making strong appeals that Torah, that is, the first five books of the old covenant, is subsequent and subordinate to Abraham's covenant. The larger program of God is revealed in Abraham's covenant. It's not revealed on Sinai.

The law is good. The law reveals sin. The law does many things that Paul will talk about even in the book of Romans, especially unpacks all of that.

But as we shall see, the law was just a temporary arrangement. It was a good thing, but it was temporary. Abraham's covenant supersedes the covenant made with Moses on Sinai.

And so the larger program indeed is revealed in Abraham's covenant, where one is included in God's unfolding promise by what? By faith. Abraham was justified before the law. Four hundred and thirty years before the law was given, Abraham was justified, made righteous by believing, by trusting what God called him to do.

Now, why is this important? Because the roots of our salvation are located in the promise made to Abraham. We saw last week in Galatians three, verse eight, I quote it. The scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles.

That means nations apart from the Jewish nation, all the nations, all of us. The scripture foresaw that God would justify the nations by faith and announce the gospel. This is why this is important and announce the gospel in advance to Abraham.

God preached the gospel to Abraham. What is that? Here it is. All nations will be blessed through you.

That's what Paul says. What does that mean? All nations will be blessed through you, Abraham, through your seed, as we came to see last week and through the one seed, not the many seeds, the many seeds carried the one seed that would eventually be conceived in the womb of Mary through Jesus Christ. Or let's say Yeshua Hamashiach.

Jesus is Joshua and his last name is not Christ. Christ means anointed one. Right.

Jesus Christ, Jesus, the anointed one. And that's just Greek for Hamashiach, which means the Messiah, the anointed one. Sometimes we need to kind of break our thinking up sometimes when we just hear Jesus Christ so much.

I mean, Jesus Christ is used in profanity all the time, you know, but it's Jesus, the anointed one. Joshua, see that Old Testament reign in that he's Joshua, the deliverer, Jesus Christ, the anointed one. And last week we looked at the power of baptism superseding circumcision.

What we heard about this morning and through baptism, male and female now have been incorporated into Messiah, into Joshua and his body, the one people of God. There's not two covenants now. There's one people of God, Jew and Gentile made one through the seed of Joshua.

And it's without respect. We saw this. There's neither what? Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male and female.

That's saying that we're all made one and have the same status in Jesus without respect to privileges of one's race. And oh, do we need to continue to hear this? You guys, it's not just about some ancient Jew and Gentile war without respect to the privileges of race, social class, slave or free, but social class today. Classism is just entrenched in the very fabric of our fallen world, just like racism is or gender.

You see, if you were a male, if you were a Jewish male, one of the things that you would pray is that, God, I thank you that I'm not a Gentile and that I'm not a woman. Paul is playing on that prayer, that

benediction, and he's saying that baptism in Jesus Christ obliterates that prayer. It's invalid now.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male and female in Jesus, according to superiority. There is no superiority in those distinctions. All are one in the one human being now, the new human being, Jesus Christ.

It's radical stuff, you guys, the implications of this. So I challenge some of you to begin to work this out with us. What does this look like for us in Kansas City? All of that will apply to how we move forth in restoring the foundations of the city in Jesus, serving the city in Jesus.

While these categories remain, I'm still a man. You're still a woman, right? He's not obliterating those categories. He's obliterating those categories in terms of superiority.

He's not calling us androgynous. He's saying that because you're a man, that doesn't make you any better than a woman before Jesus Christ coming into the one people of God. All are on equal footing as Abraham's children and equal heirs, according to the promise.

That gets us into today in chapter four. What's he talking about? What I'm saying is this, that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. When you're too young to inherit the estate, he's equating that with what he's already called the law as a pedagogue, a custodian, a temporary au pair in a sense, keeping check over Israel for the time being until Messiah came forth.

The law was a temporary au pair, a custodian, a pedagogue in the Roman household system. A pedagogue was sort of an exalted slave, so to speak, who would come in and be paid to take care of the children until they became a certain age where they didn't need the pedagogue anymore. He's equating that with the law and the nation of Israel.

As long as Israel was a child, in a sense, not ready to fully inherit what God had promised, the law was given to him, Israel in and those who would come in to the nation of Israel through circumcision. We saw that in Abraham in the passage this morning. He had lots of Gentile servants that he brought in through circumcision.

Now, that really will test your commitment. I don't know if I want to be a part of the one people of God, if that's what it's going to say. I've already been through that trauma and I don't remember it.

Right. So I've been told. So I've been told.

Oh, yes. Amen. I got an amen somewhere there.

It was a guy, right? All right. And so verse two, the heir is subject to guardians like that's the law. The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father.

OK, now he's saying that he's going to say some radical stuff here. He's going to say so also in verse three, when we were under age talking about the nation of Israel and he is a part of that, we he's including himself. When we were under age, we were in slavery.

You're anticipating we're in slavery under the law. But he's not going to say that right now. He's going to equate something with that.

He's going to use a Greek category of the elementary principles of the world. And we'll talk about what is that? What in the world is he talking about? So as long as when we were under age, we were in slavery under the elementary spiritual forces of the world, when the set time had fully come, God sent his son. OK, now let's back up elementary spiritual forces.

It's a real shocking statement that Paul is making because he's talking about the period of old creation. About fallen creation, about the period where the nation of Israel was still under the law, it was like a pedagogue, a household slave keeping the nation in check because they were immature. The nation of Israel was immature.

It had not fully grown into its fullness of maturity that God had planned. OK, so he's saying that. And so because of that and because of the time period to go back under the law when Jesus has come to fulfill that, it's like going back under a religious system, living by principles.

And there's a lot of Christianity that's preached, that's principle based. Principle based Christianity is not the gospel, guys, that is also living by wisdom and principles apart from the person of Jesus Christ is coming and pulling Christianity back under some kind of rule and legalistic system that if you do this, this will happen. That's not Christianity.

Christianity. That is not Christianity, that's not grace, you see, and that's what Paul is going to war with over this because they were Gentile Christians, he evangelized them, they were full of the Holy Spirit already, they were already sons and daughters of God. And then Judaizers are coming in, trying to draw them back, saying you need one other thing to be complete in Jesus.

We don't need anything else to be complete. Oh, you need to pray this way or you need this book or you need that principle or you need to, you know, five principles to a successful life. You ever heard of that? That can be helpful, but that's not gospel.

Elementary principles, what are those things? Slavery under the elementary spiritual forces of the cosmos, the Greek categories that Paul's pulling out, speaking to Gentiles, and they were sort of like the the building blocks of the universe in the Greek mentality, the elements of air, earth, fire, water. But it also came to include religious and philosophical systems that we import now into Christianity. He's saying that life in Christ is not based in principles.

But a person. Do you want a principle or do you want a person? Do you want something to fulfill or do you want someone to know who is a redeemer, who is a deliverer, who is one who is eternal principles come and go, but the Lord remains forever, the risen Lord Jesus Christ. If you study world religions and you'll see karma, the principle of karma in Hinduism and Buddhism.

That's a great example of something under the elementary principles of the world, most of the world lives this way, you guys. Most of the world lives under the domination of karma. Just by sheer population.

What is karma? Where one's fate is held captive to the sum of the way I live out my life and I get plenty of chances to a Buddhist to be born again, again, again, again. You've got to keep doing it and doing it and doing it until you get it right. That's slavery, where one's fate is held captive to the sum of one's actions in this and previous states, I mean, you know, if you don't get it as a human being, you may come back as a slug and have to start all over again up the food chain.

Count me out, please count me out. But here's the radical thing. Paul is so bold as to place Torah.

Under that age, that age of religion instead of relationship. Christianity is not a religion, you guys. Academically, they'll call it one of the great religions of the world.

Christianity comes and trumps all religions, for Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, the life. And there's been ways, there's been truths. There's been certain principles that have been good in all the systems under the stoichia is the elementary principles of the world.

And Torah is included in that, the law of Moses. But it's no longer valid now. Because the one has come who has fulfilled Torah, he didn't come to abolish the law, but to fill it.

And he did in his life, death, resurrection and ascension. And he is our great high priest now. And he didn't leave us as orphans, but he sent the Holy Spirit to us to animate us now.

And so you say, well, a lot of the things you do in the Anglican Church looks really religious to me. It's because you're not reading our hearts. You don't know how devoted we are when we bow for the cross.

I'm worshipping the one true God when I bow for the cross, it's not religion to me, it's not form, it's reality. It's reality, all of these are symbols that point to the greater reality and we're worshipping the greater reality through the symbols. And so in placing Torah under the elementary principles of the world, Paul is saying that you need to be set free.

There's there's something happening here. And he's going to start using Exodus language back in the Old Testament. He's drawing on the language of Exodus, the Exodus from Egyptian slavery to proclaim a new exodus, a new Moses.

When Moses and Elijah show up on the Mount of Transfiguration, it says in Luke's account that he's talking to them about his exodus departure. It's translated departure, but the Greek word is exodus. He's talking to them about a new exodus in his atoning blood on the cross.

Christ, our Passover, he's passing over from death to life in the literal resurrection from the dead. And he's the prototype, the first of all of us who will be raised in him in the same kind of materialistic body. They can walk through walls, and so he's using Exodus language and freedom to the captives is the result of the new exodus in Christ, Isaiah 61, the spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach good news to the poor, to release the captives.

He's come to set us free, you see. The rescue affects freedom from the reign of sin and death, freedom from the principalities and powers, from the spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places, Ephesians six, freedom from the elementary principles of this world, freedom from living under the law when it's already been lived out for us so that we live anew in Christ and Messiah, in the power of the Holy Spirit. That's what it's all about.

This is the new exodus in Jesus Christ. Religion has been set aside for a new way, a new life. The law cannot bring life, Paul is saying.

Only God can bring life. And that's why we say I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life. We we held that life, we we blew it out when we became subject to sin and death.

Death became normative for all creation. Until the one who was to come in that seed of Abraham that would undo death and undo sin and establish our destiny again, once again, what was intended in the

Garden of Eden is being recapitulated now in Jesus Christ, the second Adam, who brings us into a new relationship in the life of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the new exodus in Christ, religion has been set aside for a new way of life in Christ, drawing us into an intimate communion, an intimate communion of persons, Christ in us, the hope of glory, God, the father and the son and the Holy Spirit.

The father's family is being restored through two sendings, verse four through six. When the set time had fully come in the fullness of time, right in the fullness of time, the Trinity is revealed and God, the father sent forth his son, born of a woman born under the law to redeem, to set free. This is exodus language to redeem those under the law that we might receive adoption.

That we might receive adoption to sonship because you are his sons and daughters. He's using son language, as we explained last week, because the son got the inheritance. It's theological language, sonship, the son got the inheritance, but now we're in the son, male and female, and we all get the inheritance.

And so that's one sending and that's the incarnation. God sent forth his son, born of a woman. It already is presupposing a preexistence in the logos in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God, God, the father sent forth his son.

Here's the next sending. God sent the spirit of his son to sendings here. God sent the spirit of his son into our hearts, the spirit who who calls out of a father of a father, an Aramaic word that Jesus used frequently to talk about his relationship with God, the way Jesus addressed his father and receiving the spirit of adoption.

The Holy Spirit brings us into the same relationship with Abba as Jesus had. It's the spirit of adoption that allows us not only to say of a father, but that's actually God himself praying inside of us. The spirit of the son praying, crying out of a father, that's just the beginning of the prayer.

And then we fill it in of a father dot, dot, dot. That's prayer, we become a temple of the Holy Spirit, we become royal priest because the Holy Spirit, the spirit of the son, the spirit of the priest, the spirit of the great high priest is living inside of you through your baptism and saying this is what happened in your baptism. Abba, father, the spirit is crying in our hearts and it was used throughout to communicate not the age of a person, not you need to become more childlike and say Abba, because in Aramaic Abba is used throughout life.

It's not just used by a young child. You could be 80 years old or 60 years old and call your father Abba still. And it doesn't sound like in the South when, forgive me, I was raised in the South.

And so this is a cultural thing. But I have friends my age, right, females, and it's appropriate to say daddy throughout your whole life. It's like Abba, but guys won't do it.

My father's passed away, but I don't know if I would call him daddy. I would call him dad, but it has an affectionate ring to it, doesn't it, daddy? But it doesn't translate for us because Abba is used and it's not a it's not a cultural disconnect. Abba is something that you would just call affectionately your father all of your life.

That's what Jesus had with his father. He had this fond affection, this intimate relationship with his father, and he came to reveal that relationship. No one called God father until Jesus showed up.

It's very rare. You'll see a couple of passages in the prophetic writings in the Old Testament, but it was not normative at all to call God father. And Jesus came to show us the father, if you've seen me, you've seen the father.

And I still want us to speak affectionately out of relationship about our connection, our communion with Jesus Christ. This is not some man upstairs. You ever heard that? Pray to the man upstairs that tells me that that person has no relationship with Abba.

They need to be introduced. They need to be introduced to the Abba in the heart, the spirit of the son, the spirit of sonship, crying Abba father. Jesus spoke about two missions, his mission of redemption and the spirit's mission of making the work of Christ universal.

And this is why Jesus says it's really important and good for you that I'm going away because if I don't leave and ascend to the father, I cannot send the spirit of adoption. And it's the Holy Spirit that connects us to the Holy Trinity, not just to Jesus, but to the father. This is a Trinitarian work.

God sent the son and the son sends the spirit. God also says that, you know, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the father. It's the spirit of the son.

This is Trinitarian. This is not Jesus only. This is why our prayers are constructed so tightly around Trinitarian language.

It's not to be religious. It's to be relational, because to have relationship with God is to have a relationship with the Holy Trinity. And that relationship is made possible by the coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives.

The spirit of his son empowers us to pray, Abba father, dot, dot, dot. What's your prayer today? Abba father, dot, dot, dot. In the name of the father and the son and the Holy Spirit.

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