



Romans

Right With God

God's Children

Lesson Thirty-Two

Mission Arlington/Mission Metroplex Curriculum

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God's Children

One of the best things that can happen is for a child to be in a Christian home. Some are born into such homes that are filled with love and in which children enjoy the strength and protection of two Christian parents. Others are adopted into homes like that. They may have come from difficult circumstances: parents died, parents abandoned them, or parents just can't take care of them. But in their new home they find safety and love. Being born into or adopted into a Christian home happens, maybe just not often enough.

Today, we will talk about the most wonderful adoption that any of us can imagine. We will see Paul's encouragement to the Romans to understand their place in God's family. Read Romans 8:12-17.

Verse twelve is very important. It lets us know that Christians continue to have a sinful nature. There can be no doubt. We must continue to live with that nature until physical death takes it away forever. Paul says that if we live according to that nature, we die. But, he says, we are not obligated, we don't have to do that. When you become God's child, you have the Holy Spirit of God to help you conquer the sinful nature. Paul assures us that when we become Christians, human nature cannot control us.* We owe human nature nothing... nothing! The One to whom we have obligation is God's Spirit. We owe Him everything.

Then Paul tells us a most wonderful thing. He says that, when we ask Jesus to be our Savior, God adopts us. Paul was thinking about the Roman law. In adoption, a person had to pass from one father to another. He had to pass out of the possession and control of one father into the equally absolute control and possession of another. There were two steps. The first was a symbolic sale, a kind of ceremony, in which copper coins and scales were used. Twice the birth father symbolically sold his son to the adopting father, and twice he bought him back. The third time he did not buy him back and so the power of the birth father was broken.

After the sale there followed a ceremony where the adopting father went to one of the Roman magistrates, and presented a legal case for the transference of the person to be adopted into his family. This completed the adoption.

The consequences of adoption are most important to the picture that is in Paul's mind. There were four main consequences. (1) The adopted person lost all rights to his old family, and gained all the rights of a fully legitimate son in his new family. (2) He became heir to his new father's estate. Even if other sons were born into the new family, who were real blood relations, it did not affect his rights. (3) In law, the old life of the adopted person was

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completely wiped out. The adopted person was regarded as a new person entering into a new life that had nothing to do with the past. (4) In the eyes of the law, the adopted person was literally and absolutely the son of the new father.

He uses another picture of Roman adoption. The adoption ceremony was carried out in the presence of seven witnesses. If the adopting father died, and there was some dispute about the right of the adopted son to inherit, one or more of the original seven witnesses stepped forward and swore that the adoption was genuine and true. Thus the right of the adopted person was guaranteed. So, Paul is saying, it is the Holy Spirit Himself who is the witness to our adoption into the family of God. You can't get any more certain than that.

Verses fifteen and sixteen are for those who might question their salvation. When you doubt, just remember that God's Spirit made you a child of God, and God's Spirit invites you to call Him Father.

Scripture Memory: "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." Romans 8:16

*Underlined statements in this Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.

For the Teacher:

Lesson Goal: To show the student how certain his or her relationship is with God.

1. Roman adoption is best understood by the expression, *patria potestas*. Literally, "power of the father." The *patria potestas* was the father's power over his family; that power was absolute; it was actually the power of absolute disposal and control, and in the early days it was actually the power of life and death. In regard to his father, a Roman son never came of age. No matter how old he was, he was still under the *patria potestas*, in the absolute possession, under the absolute control, of his father. Obviously this made adoption into another family very difficult, and a very serious step.
2. There were two steps in the Roman adoption process. The first was known as *man-ci-pA'-ti-o*, and it was carried out by a symbolic sale. The second step, after the sale was a formal legal ceremony called *vin-di-ca'-ti-o*.
3. Roman history provides an outstanding case of how literally and completely the adoption process was held to be true. The Emperor Claudius adopted Nero in order that Nero might succeed him on the throne. They were not in any sense blood relations. Claudius already had a daughter, Octavia. To cement the alliance Nero wished to marry Octavia. Now, Nero and Octavia were in no sense connected; they were not blood relations; yet, in the eyes of the law, they were brother and sister; and before they could marry the Roman Senate had to pass special legislation to enable Nero to marry a girl who was legally his own sister. Nothing shows better how binding adoption was in Rome.
4. We see then that every step of Roman adoption was meaningful in the mind of Paul when he communicated the picture of our adoption into the Family of God. Once we were in the absolute possession of sin, in the absolute control of our own human nature; but God, in His mercy, has brought us into His absolute possession. The old life has no more right over us; we begin again; a new life with God. We become heirs of all the riches of God. If that is so, we become joint-heirs with Jesus Christ, God's own Son. That which Christ inherited, and inherits, we also inherit. If Christ had to suffer we also inherit that suffering, and since Christ was raised to life and glory, we also inherit life and glory.
5. Becoming heirs is central to Paul's teaching on becoming God's children. See Galatians 4:6, 7. I Peter 4:13.

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Student Worksheet

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=When you become God's _____, you have the Holy Spirit of God to help you conquer the sinful nature. Paul assures us that when we become _____, human nature cannot control us.

=Paul says that, when we ask _____ to be our Savior, God _____ us.

=We owe human nature _____...nothing! The One to whom we have obligation is God's _____. We owe Him _____.

=The adopted person was regarded as a _____ person entering into a _____ life that had nothing to do with the _____.

=The Roman adoption ceremony was carried out in the presence of _____ witnesses.

=Paul is saying, it is the Holy Spirit Himself who is the _____ to our adoption into the family of _____. You can't get any more _____ than that.

=Remember that God's Spirit made _____ a child of God. God's Spirit invites _____ to call Him Father.

Scripture Memory: "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." Romans 8:16

A Roman Road to Salvation:

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Everyone is a sinner and needs salvation.

Romans 6:23a "For the wages of sin is death." The law of God is unchangeable. If someone sins the penalty must be paid, the payment is death.

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners Christ died for us." God loves us so much, according to John 3:16, that He sent His Son, Jesus, to die for our sins.

Romans 6:23b "But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." The penalty for sin is spiritual death, but God, through the death of Jesus on the cross, took the penalty for the sins of all people, and now everyone can have eternal life. See also, II Corinthians 5:21

Romans 10:9, 10 "That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." To personally receive the gift of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus, you trust God to be what He says He is. Believing that "God raised Him (Jesus) from the dead" is to accept all that the Bible says about God and His Son, Jesus. Then you speak (confess) the words, "Jesus is Lord," as a statement of faith. Believing "with your heart" means that you believe with your mind and with everything that you are.

Romans 10:13 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." You have the promise of God Himself that if you do what Romans 10:9, 10 says, you will become God's child and have eternal life.

Romans 12:1, 2 "I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will." Becoming a Christian is a life-long act of faith and worship.