

### 3 • Baptism is an Adoption

**What is baptism?** We hear so much about baptism in sermons, classes, and Bible reading, but what *is* it? There are lots of ways to answer that question. The word *baptism* means “to **dip**, **immerse**, **submerge**, or **plunge**.”

We have many examples in the Bible of people being baptized, but what is God doing when a person is baptized “in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of” their sins (**Acts 2:38**)? One very real and true way of thinking about it? **Baptism is an adoption.**

**Galatians 3:23-4:7** is our key text; let’s listen closely to what the apostle Paul wrote:

Now 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, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.



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. In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. But when the fullness of time had come, 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. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

It’s clear that this was a precious truth to the apostle Paul. He similarly wrote in **Romans 8**:

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (**8:14-17**)

What is baptism? There are many ways to answer. For one, **baptism is an adoption.**



## For Class & Family Discussion:

- Looking back a little in **Galatians 3**, what can we learn about “the law” in **3:19-24**? Every single one of us experiences a problem in our relationship with God. Is it his fault? Is it the fault of his law? If not, where’s the problem?
- **Galatians 3:26** contains incredible news of an amazing opportunity. How would you rephrase or summarize that news in your own words?
- According to **Galatians 3:27**, what is happening when we are “baptized into Christ”? What does that mean?
- **Galatians 3:28** certainly sounds like a really important thing for Christians to grasp. What does the Holy Spirit—through the apostle Paul—want us to recognize about those who have been “baptized into Christ”?
- **Galatians 4:4-5** is one of those great Bible summaries of centuries’ worth of history. What stands out to you about the way Paul makes that summary?
- **“Adoption.”** When you hear that word, what goes through your mind?
- **“Abba.”** It’s the everyday Aramaic word that Jewish children would have used in the first century for their earthly fathers. Who else used “Abba” in **Mark 14:36**, and how does that make the news in **Galatians 4:6** even more powerful?
- In **Romans 8:14**, what does it mean to be “led by the Spirit of God”? **Galatians 5:16-25** might also be helpful here...
- Let’s read **Romans 8:16-17** again, together and slowly. In your own words, what does it mean to be an “heir of God and fellow heir with Christ”?