




All verses from NASB unless otherwise noted.

God has given us experiences in life that help us understand spiritual truths. One of those spiritual truths is that we are adopted into God's family as sons and daughters when we commit through baptism to a life based on faith in God and in Jesus's work on the cross and his resurrection that gives us hope for life in the Kingdom. Some of us may have had experience in life with adopting a child or being adopted ourselves. Through such an experience, we have some idea of the new relationships and identity such adoption gives us.

When we adopted our daughter, we knew that she had become part of our family with all the same rights and responsibilities conferred on her as to a begotten child. It also put on us as her parents all the rights and responsibilities as guardians which biological parents take for granted.

In this section of the letter to the Romans, Paul discusses some aspects of what spiritual adoption means for the believer.



So then, brethren, we are under obligation,  
not to the flesh, to live according to the  
flesh—

(8:12)

*But we are under obligation  
to the Spirit,  
To live according to the Spirit*

We begin with a transition from Paul's earlier discussion about the struggle between God's Spirit in us and our fleshly or natural inclinations. He leads into his thoughts about adoption with a responsibility of the adoptee.

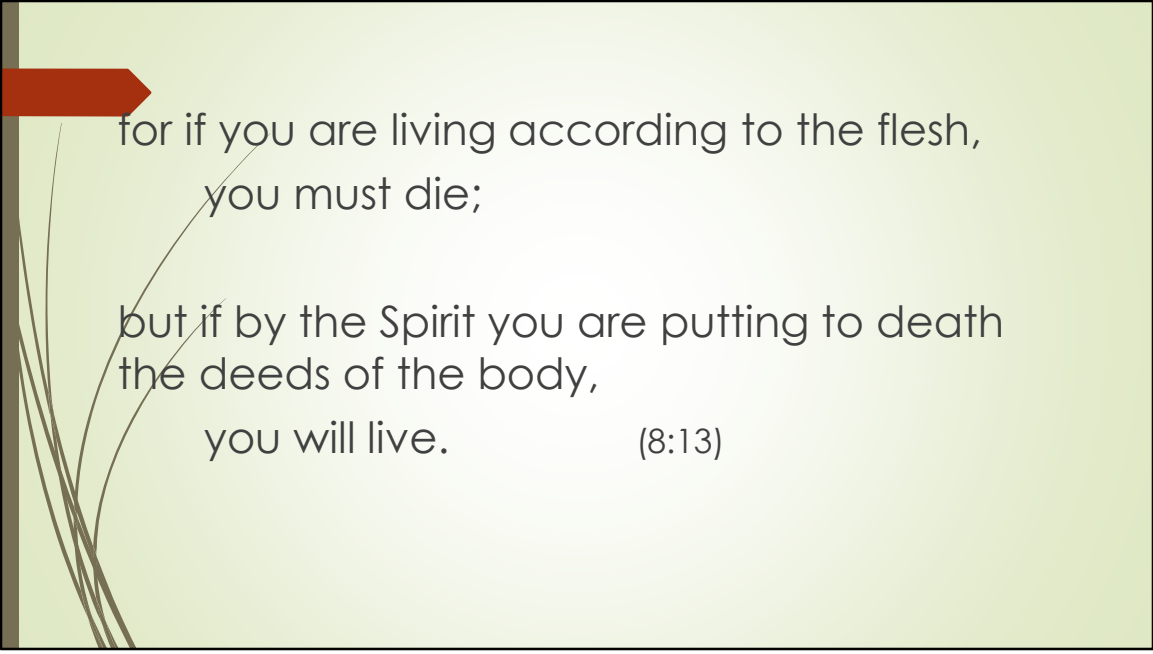
This verse has the first part of a thought that Paul never quite finishes. He says we are "under obligation," not to the flesh, and then doesn't complete the thought by telling us to what we are under obligation. His thoughts seem to be racing with explanations about the contrast between living according to the flesh versus living according to the Spirit. But by what Paul talks about next, we can finish his thought:

We are not under obligation to the flesh . . . We are under obligation to the Spirit, to live according to the Spirit.

The word "obligation" is a translation of the Greek *opheiletēs* which indicates "one who owes a moral obligation" (Spirit Filled Life Bible, NKJV, p 1541). This means that when considering what is right to do, there is no obligation or requirement to live according to the flesh. Instead, in consideration of what is right or moral, the obligation is to live according to the Spirit BECAUSE the Spirit of God dwells in us. And the Spirit is in us because of the great price paid to redeem us from slavery to sin. We

are obligated to honor God above our flesh in this matter. We no longer owe a debt to sin, but we owe honor to God.

Synonyms to “obligation” (NKJV “debtors”) – duty, responsibility, commitment, commission, charge, indebtedness, task



for if you are living according to the flesh,  
you must die;

but if by the Spirit you are putting to death  
the deeds of the body,  
you will live. (8:13)

Paul states, again, that living according to the flesh or natural man leads to certain death.

Some groups hold to a “once saved, always saved” or “eternal security” teaching that means after being “saved” (defined as repenting of sin and trusting Christ as savior) it does not matter how they live, no matter how sinful of a lifestyle, they will receive eternal life.


This verse does not align with that “once saved, always saved” idea. Remember that Paul is writing to the church in Rome, to brethren (brothers and sisters) in faith (8:12). It is to other believers that he is saying that if they live according to the flesh, they will die. “Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Does this mean believers will never express a deed of the flesh in their actions? Of course not. But with repentance and confession, those fleshly actions are forgiven (1

John 1:9) and the believer can return to living according to the Spirit.

Life comes when we put to death the deeds of flesh by the Spirit. And this happens each time we repent of and refuse the flesh.

What does “by the Spirit” mean? The next verse serves to explain . . .



For all who are being led by the Spirit of God,  
these are sons of God.

(8:14)

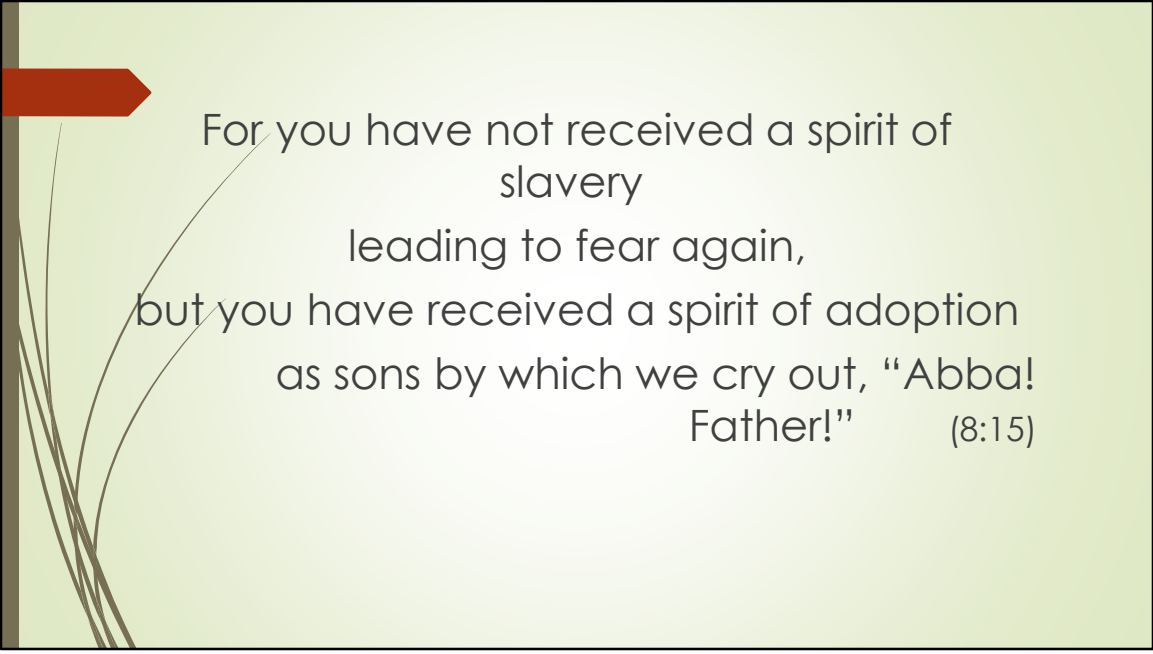
love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,  
faithfulness, gentleness, self-control

(Galatians 5:22-23)

Putting our natural man to death happens as we follow the leading of the Spirit of God. When we grow to respond with the fruits of the Spirit, when our character exhibits love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, we are putting to death the natural responses of our flesh, things such as selfishness, rudeness, anger and spite, strife, impurity, jealousy, etc.

Each time we choose to live according to one of the characteristics of Galatians 5:22-23, we are submitting to the leading of God's Spirit in making us more like Christ.

Now Paul brings in a new idea. When we live according to the Spirit, we show ourselves to be a son or daughter of God! Just as Jesus is the son of God (God's begotten son) and demonstrated all these fruits of the Spirit, we, too, show ourselves as part of the family when we exhibit the characteristics of our heavenly Father and spiritual brother, Jesus.



For you have not received a spirit of  
slavery  
leading to fear again,  
but you have received a spirit of adoption  
as sons by which we cry out, “Abba!  
Father!” (8:15)

This Spirit that leads us after our conversion (repentance and baptism) does NOT take us into slavery of living according to fear.

From a recent Darren Hardy vlog: neuroscientists say that the conscious mind provides only 5% or less of cognitive activity during waking hours. Most people are at 1%. The subconscious mind is at a much more powerful level than the conscious, so 95-99% of our responses in life come from the natural subconscious mind. And 90% of the subconscious mind is fear-based. (Remember learning about fight or flight responses?) The other 10% is desire-based. Most of our decisions, actions, emotions, and behaviors are a result of the 95% subconscious brain activity, most of which is fear-based or looking for threats

<https://darrenweekly.wordpress.com/2019/09/04/instant-inoculation-to-85-of-all-illnesses/>).

What does this mean? The first evaluation our subconscious brain makes is whether there is something to fear in what is happening around us. The other, much smaller subconscious natural response is that of desire – what I want.

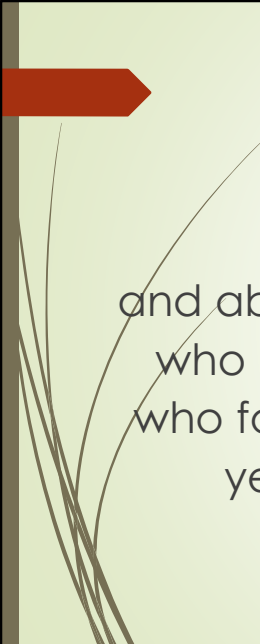
When we examine ways that people sin against God, we can see that there are two

strong underlying drives that lead to sin: pride and fear. Pride relates to greed in that we believe we deserve something and we should have it – whether it is things or status or power, etc..

Fear can look like different things: fear that we will miss out on something; fear that we will come to harm; fear that we aren't all we should be; fears about the future; fears of what the past means for the present. Pride can also be tinged with fear – fear that if we don't have or do something, we will look less which damages our pride in ourselves. Fears that are not turned over to God in faith and trust can lead us into sin.

But we no longer have to be a slave to what leads to fear BECAUSE we have a Spirit of adoption as children of the Almighty Creator God!

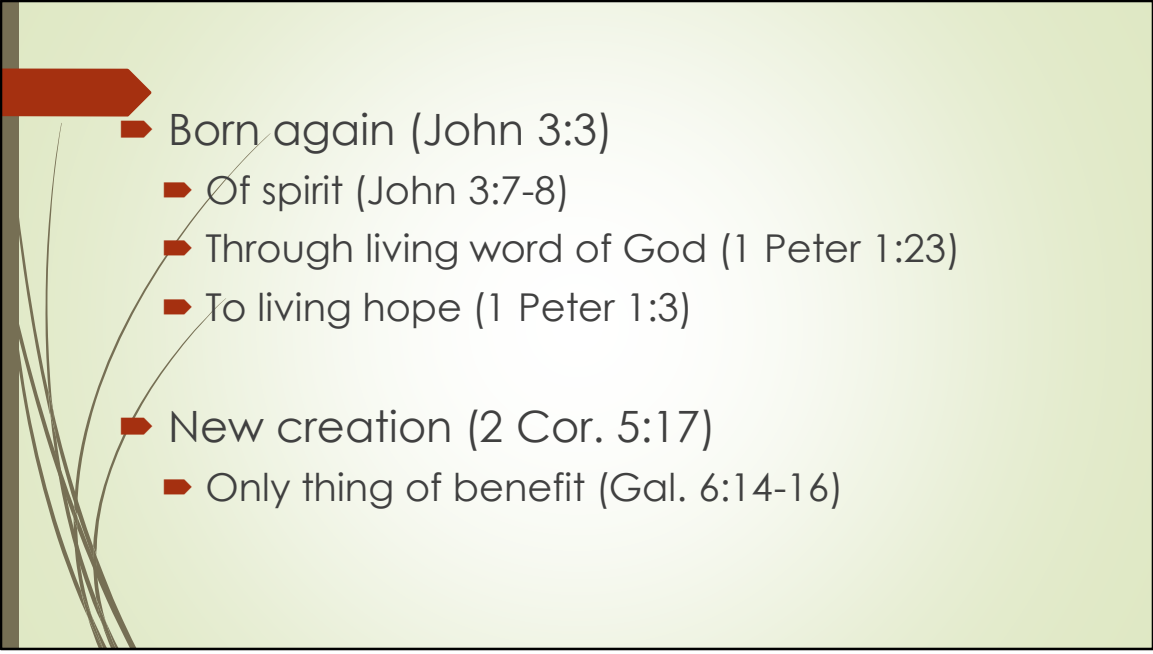




“The LORD, the LORD God,  
compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger,  
and abounding in lovingkindness and truth;  
who keeps lovingkindness for thousands,  
who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin;  
yet He will by no means leave the  
guilty unpunished.”

(Exodus 34:6-7a)

When fear starts chasing our thoughts, we can call out to our heavenly Father about whatever we are facing. He is the Father who is “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love . . .” See also Psalm 103.

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- ▶ Born again (John 3:3)
    - ▶ Of spirit (John 3:7-8)
    - ▶ Through living word of God (1 Peter 1:23)
    - ▶ To living hope (1 Peter 1:3)
  - ▶ New creation (2 Cor. 5:17)
    - ▶ Only thing of benefit (Gal. 6:14-16)

The Bible has beautiful language to describe and remind us that in Christ, through His sacrifice and our commitment through baptism to live by faith, we have a new standing with God.

Jesus described it as being “born again” – born of Spirit. A new birth, a rebirth that is spiritual, not physical. Peter tells us we “have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, *that is*, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). He adds that this is “born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3).

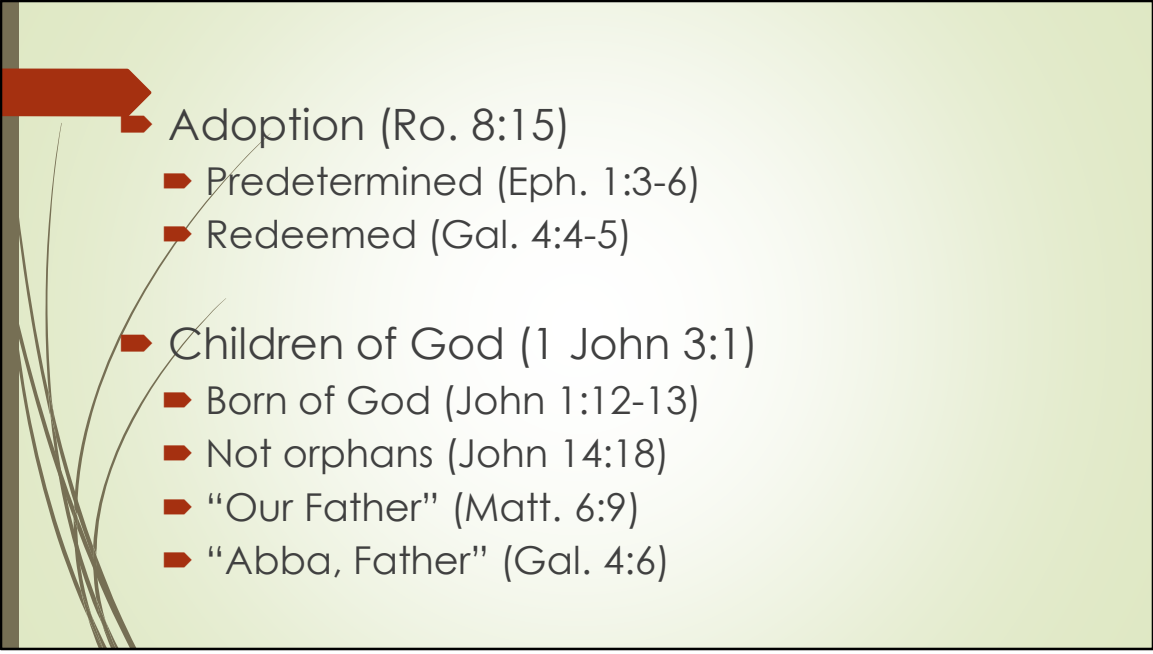
Scripture also says when we are in Christ, we are a new creation.

“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

How many of us can say we wish we could start over or do it again? Well, although we may not be able to go back and rewrite history, this is our chance to write something new and different into our present and future. We can start over anew in Christ. Becoming this new creation in Christ brings great benefit in terms of our

relationship with God.

“But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy *be* upon them, and upon the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:14-16).

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- Adoption (Ro. 8:15)
    - Predetermined (Eph. 1:3-6)
    - Redeemed (Gal. 4:4-5)
  
  - Children of God (1 John 3:1)
    - Born of God (John 1:12-13)
    - Not orphans (John 14:18)
    - “Our Father” (Matt. 6:9)
    - “Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6)

“You have received the spirit of adoption” (Romans 8:15).

Paul tells us that God predetermined, from the time of the creation of the world, that through Jesus He would adopt as His children those who believe. God had a plan in mind that enables Him to adopt us.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in [Christ] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined (predetermined) us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:3-6).

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons” (Gal. 4:4-5)

We are called “children of God” in Scripture:

“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are.” (1 John 3:1a).

“But as many as received [Jesus], to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

Jesus even promised “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him” (John 14:18-21). What a close relationship is our family with our heavenly Father and brother Jesus.

Jesus taught us to pray or address God as our Father when we talk with Him (Matthew 6:9). “Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Galatians 4:6). “Abba” is Aramaic for father. “It is a term expressing warm affection and filial confidence. It has no perfect equivalent in our language” (Easton’s Bible Dictionary, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/eastons-bible-dictionary/abba.html>).




The spirit itself agrees with our spirit that we are God's children.

If we are His children, then we are His heirs.

We are heirs of God, and fellow-heirs with the Messiah, provided that we suffer with him in order to take part in the future glory of the Kingdom with him.

(Ro. 8:16-17, The One God translation)

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- Heirs (Ro. 8:16-17)
    - Abraham's descendants-heirs according to promise (Gal. 3:29)
    - Galatians 4:7
    - Partakers of the promise (Eph. 3:6)
    - Hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7)
    - Heirs of Kingdom (James 2:5)

Adoption grants to the child all the rights and responsibilities that a biological child takes for granted. One of these rights is to be heir to the inheritance being passed on by the parents. In the case of God, the inheritance includes the promise made to Abraham, promise of life in the Kingdom:

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise” (Gal. 3:26-29).

After our baptism into the family of God, we have a whole new family tree, so to speak. Abraham becomes a human forefather; Jesus is our brother; God is Father over all His family; we have numerous brothers and sisters in Christ – some live close, some live far, some died long ago, some are not yet born.

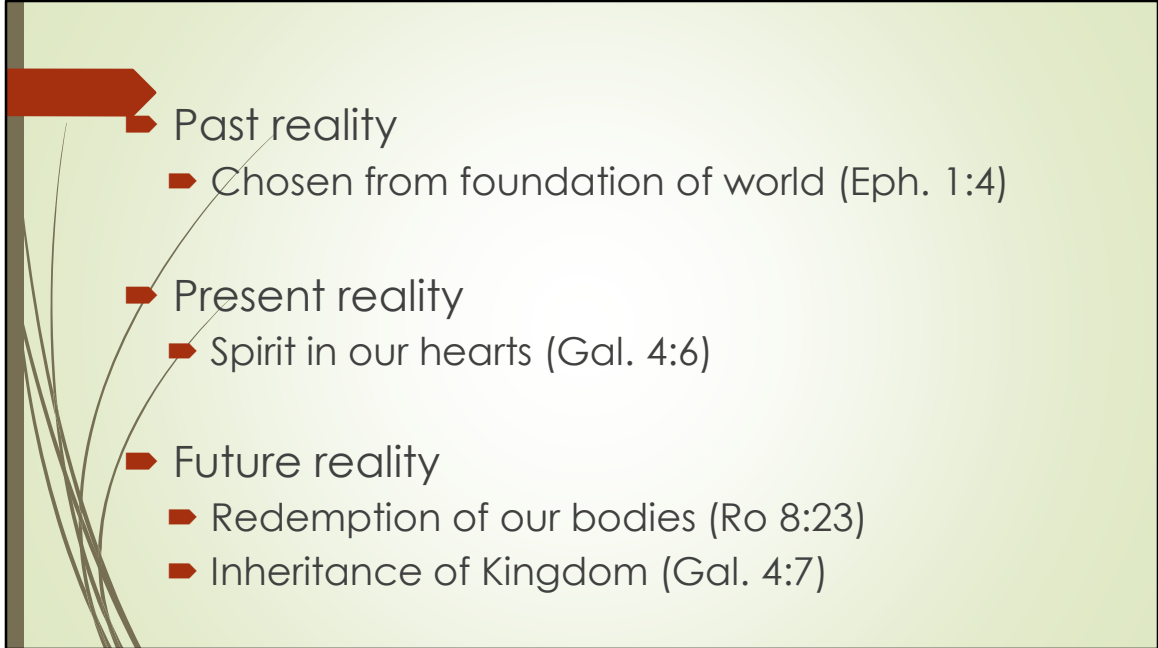
“Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God” (Galatians 4:7).

“Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (Ephesians 3:6).

“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, [which] He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:5-7).

“Heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him” (James 2:5b).





Past reality: At the foundation of the world, God chose to grant adoption to those who believe in Him and in the Messiah

Present reality: We have “the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” (Galatians 4:6)

Future reality: The redemption of our bodies, when we are physically changed to no longer decay and die (Romans 8:23 and others), as well as an inheritance in the Kingdom of God (Galatians 4:7)

## Challenge for the Child of God



1. develop “new” and “spiritually-driven” opinions, attitudes, and responses to the world
2. persevere as we wait for our hope of the Kingdom to be revealed

Before we were born physically, we did not have conscious thoughts or desires or feelings. When we came into the world, we became conscious of ourselves, those around us, our environment and we developed opinions, attitudes, and responses to that world. The challenge now for those who are born again is two-fold:

1) to develop “new” and “spiritually-driven” opinions, attitudes, and responses to the world which correspond to who we are as adopted children of God. This leads to life.

2) And to persevere as we wait for our hope of the Kingdom to be revealed, knowing that any of “what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will give us later” (Romans 8:18, TLB).