

Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

A1020 – May 16, 2010 – Galatians 14-7 – The Adoption

We want to pick up where we left off. Gal 4 is picking up and extending Gal 3 by way of illustration. Gal 4:1-2 is the basic illustration from the human realm that carries truths for both Israel and the Gentiles. So we want to review that basic illustration, lest we fail to understand Paul's point.

Gal 4:1-2, the illustration "Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, ²but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father." The illustration is from wealthy Roman culture. Wealthy Roman families would own slaves and the slaves would do all kinds of labor for the family. And they would also want to have boys because they wanted an heir to their estate. But while that boy was young he was no different than a slave in that both were under the authority of the family father. But when the boy grew up the father would set a date at which time the boy would become a son and would become the owner of everything. Now when that day came was totally up to the father. The boy could be as young as 14 and as old as 25, but on the scheduled date the father would put his toga on the son and the son would become heir of all the father's possessions.

Gal 4:3-11 is the analog of that illustration for the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews were the child under the authority structure until the date set by God the Father when God would give Israel their inheritance and make them owner of everything. The Gentiles were the slave and the slave was not the heir but since the nation Israel rejected the Son that God sent, which resulted in the crucifixion, we have a situation arise where the Gentiles get an opportunity to respond *en masse* to Jesus Christ and become sons themselves

But until that time both the nation Israel and the Gentiles were under these authorities, awaiting the date set by the father. Now the authorities were the *stoicheia*, which we defined as the demonic powers. During the OT both Israel and the Gentiles were enslaved to the demonic powers. And this lasted until the time set forth in verse 4, “the fullness of time.”

Alright, so here’s our picture of Israel because vv 3-5 are looking strictly at Israel. Vv 6-11 look at the Gentiles. But the picture of Israel looks like this, verse 3, “So also we [we Jews], while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.” “We were children,” imperfect tense, meaning ongoing action in past time, “we were held” also imperfect tense, meaning ongoing action in past time. Where? “in bondage,” a perfect participle, which is a temporal participle, it means past completed action with ongoing results. So at some point in the past Israel came in bondage to the elemental things of the world and they remained under the power of the elemental things of the world, which we defined very carefully as the demonic powers, the princes and principalities of darkness. And we concluded that they came under these demonic powers at Mt Sinai. At Mt Sinai God was giving Moses the Law up on top of the mountain and down at the bottom of the mountain the people were breaking the very first law. They were building the golden calf- thou shalt have no other gods before Me. So it was at that very moment that they became enslaved to the elemental things, the demonic powers and all the accompanying idolatry that came with it. The nation Israel could never get rid of the idolatry. They worshipped the golden calf, they worshipped nature gods like Baal and Ashtoreth, they worshipped Moloch and offered their children in the fire, and they worshipped the stars and constellations. And this nature worship went on from 1445 down to 586BC when God sent the nation into Exile to Babylon. At that point they turned from worshipping nature to worshipping man - man is great, man can be good enough to please God, man can generate righteousness - and so they put their hope and trust in the man-made religion of Judaism which was a warped version of the OT. Jesus Christ called it the traditions of men and said it invalidated the word of God. So as a child, in their immature years, they had to learn the lesson that the nature gods, the forces of nature, couldn’t solve their problems. And the human gods, human kings, political deals, doing good, all that couldn’t solve their problems. They tried everything as most young people do to solve their problems and it’s all gimmicks. Finally after they’d tried all the gimmicks “in the fullness of time

God sent forth His son.” In other words, all this trial and error was a training period. God was training them through the OT that you can’t rely on nature and you can’t depend on man. Those are insufficient for solving your problem. When the stage was set and they had tried these other solutions and found them to fail, that’s when God injected the Lord Jesus Christ into history.

Now that’s all true for the nation Israel in the OT. God sent forth His Son on a mission to Israel and yet Israel rejected God’s Son and that has issued in a change in the outworking of God’s plan, not a change in the plan itself. God has forever had the same plan, but a change in the outworking of the plan in light of the Jewish rejection of the Jesus’ Messiahship. So the heart of today’s passage is this momentous change for the Gentiles.

Now I want you to see something about the Lord Jesus Christ that most people don’t want to look at. So turn with me to Matthew 7:6. Who did Christ come to? This is part of the Sermon on the Mount, and who’s He speaking to here? The Jews. He says, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.” The question is, who are the dogs and who are the swine? They’re the Gentiles. Jesus is very rough on the Gentiles here; it was well known in Jewish culture that the words “dog” and “swine” stood for pagans. This is the tolerant Jesus we hear so much about from the liberal Christians. Frankly, these are passages that scare the hell of out of liberal Christians. These are not mentioned at your First Liberal congregation. These are carefully kept hidden. Some of Jesus’ blunders.

Let’s look further, turn to Matt 10. I think Matthew depicts this more than the other three Gospel writers, because his book is about how the Jews rejected and the Gentiles received despite the fact Jesus came to the Jews. Notice Matt 10:1, Jesus has summoned His twelve disciples and how does He instruct them in verse 5, “Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; ⁶but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Do you get the sense from that that Jesus is exclusivistic? What is this all about? One of the things we have to come to grips with is the intense Jewishness of Jesus. He was not one of us; He was a Jew in His humanity. He was not a Gentile. He spoke in Jewish ways, He honored the Jewish authorities, and He insisted He came exclusively to the Jews. It seems that He has an agenda here. Right now what’s on Jesus’ mind is not the Gentiles.

What is on Jesus' mind here is don't throw this stuff to the dogs. Stay away from the dogs and the pigs. Stick to the program, the program is Israel.

Let's go further to Matt 12. Here something happens. Jesus is having His conflicts with Pharisees, the Ivy League lawyers of the day who think they know the Law better than Jesus. Think of the gall of these guys. They've got their degrees, they've studied the Torah, they've memorized the verses, these guys were no stupos, they literally had the entire OT memorized. They put us to shame but here they are attacking Jesus in verse 2, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath." Do you have any idea who they're talking too? Your disciples broke code 5.346, they've got it down to the third decimal place. Did you ever stop to think who they're lecturing on the Law? The guy who wrote the Law on Mt Sinai. I think He has a pretty good idea what He wrote. But they've got their code. And you get the feeling that Jesus is getting a little resistance. And in verse 9 He gets more questions about Sabbath. Can you heal on the Sabbath? And in verse 14 He does heal, He heals a man with a withered hand. Why is Jesus doing this? To demonstrate His person, to demonstrate verse 8, that He's Lord of the Sabbath. He's showing them very clearly His person. Who am I guys? Get a clue. But verse 14 another rejection, "the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him..." And this is a turning point. About mid way through each gospel you get this turning point. Jesus offers Himself to the nation; He preaches the kingdom as at hand, He demonstrates His authority. And then something happens. In verse 22 we have the something. The something is the most tremendous miracle other than the resurrection stated in the entire NT. "Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute," look at this, the guy has three severe problems, as if one wasn't enough, this was probably the only guy on the planet to have all three of these problems. So Jesus takes the guy on planet earth who is worse off than anyone else and look what he does. They brought the man to Jesus, "and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw." ²³All the crowds were amazed," you know, who is this guy? If we saw that that's what we'd ask. Obviously Jesus is authenticating His Messiahship. Obviously He's asserting His authority over the demonic realm, over the human realm. He controls everything. So they began to say, "This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?" And so the people who've been led by the blind Pharisees, it was the blind leading the blind at the time, start to see who Jesus really is. And the Pharisees react. They perceive this as a serious threat to their position, so they immediately react to this, here

they've seen a miracle, unparalleled in all of history and it's happened in public, so everyone has seen this with their own eyes, and they've got to come up with some explanation of how He did it. So what do they say? Verse 24, The Pharisees said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons." Beelzebul was the lord of the flies, he was Satan. Now why is he called "lord of the flies?" Because it's stating what his nature is attracted to. If you had lived in the 1st century when Jesus was walking the streets you would know exactly what they were saying about Jesus. They didn't have a city sewage system and when the carts rolled down the streets they had to be drawn by donkeys and there was crud all over the streets. And what are flies attracted to? Crud. What's the spiritual parallel to the crud? Sin. What is Satan attracted to? Sin. So what are they saying about Jesus? Jesus is attracted to all the crud of Satan. He's attracted to sin. That's the seriousness of what the Jewish leadership's say in v 24. This is a very clear rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus. At this point they have formally stated, Jesus is not the Messiah, Jesus is demonic. And this is what Jesus goes on to define as the unpardonable sin. The unpardonable sin isn't suicide or something. The unpardonable sin isn't even an individual sin, it's a national sin that could only be committed in the 1st century when Jesus was on earth. It was to claim that miracles you visually saw Him do were done by Satan. That's what it means to blaspheme the Holy Spirit and that sin is a national sin committed in the 1st century by the nation Israel. From this point forward it becomes very clear that the nation Israel is not going to receive Jesus, individuals Jews receive Jesus, but nationally no, and Jesus starts to set His sights on the cross.

With that in mind turn to Matt 28:19, the Great Commission. There's a shift in Jesus' ministry. Before it was strictly Jewish right, do not go in the way of the Samaritans, do not go to the Gentiles, go only to the lost sheep of Israel. But Israel rejected and at the conclusion of Christ's earthly ministry we hear these words come from His lips, ¹⁹"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." You say all the nations? Those are Gentiles, those are the dogs, the pigs. Now you want us to go to the pigs, Jesus? Yeah, go to the pigs. Why is this? Something has happened. That something is the nation Israel's rejection of Jesus' Messiahship.

So turn to Rom 11. We want to see how Paul deals with this. Israel having rejected their Messiah opened the doors for something else. But did that mean Israel was cast off forever? A very sensitive point in theological circles. Is God through with the Jew? And if He's not, what is going on now? What's the program for the present time? What has happened now that Israel has rejected Jesus and He's gone to the cross? According to Paul salvation has come *en masse* to the Gentiles; the floodgates of salvation have opened to us. But does that imply that God is through with the Jew? All Paul says is that for a temporary period of time God has programmatically set Israel aside only to pick her back up in the end of days. In the meantime we have this thing called the Church where Gentiles are primarily the one's coming to salvation. Let's see how Paul describes it in Rom 11:11,

"I say then, they did not stumble so as to fall, did they?" [they Jews] "May it never be!" Israel will never fall finally, they stumble but God catches them on the way down and stands them back up, "But by their transgression salvation *has come* to the Gentiles," the particular stumbling of verse 11 is their rejection of Messiah, the "transgression" here is the same idea, they rejected their Messiah, which worked out in His crucifixion, but because of their transgression "salvation" came to who? "the Gentiles," the implication being that if they did not reject their Messiah and accepted Him then there would be no Gentile salvation. So your salvation and my salvation depends on Israel's national rejection of Jesus as the Messiah in the 1st century. Now why? Why Gentile salvation? Purpose clause, "to make them jealous." That is, the Gentiles are being saved so they can come alongside Jews and make them burn with jealousy that Gentiles have the Jewish Messiah. And this is standard protocol for evangelism at the present time. Every Jewish evangelist I talk to tells me the same story: Gentile believers are the primary evangelizers of Jews. They don't respond to us Jewish believers, we're black sheep, and we're looked upon as having rejected our Jewishness by receiving Jesus. But Gentiles haven't rejected their Jewishness so they'll listen to them. And this verse is explaining why it is. It's God's plan of evangelization that Gentile believers have more success evangelizing Jews than Jewish believers. It's God's program for this period of history.

Rom 11:12, "Now if their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!" Now in this verse we have two contrasting historic events. The first one is

“their failure” and the second one is “their fulfillment.” Their failure would be their failure to welcome Jesus as their Messiah in the 1st century. That failure resulted in “riches for the world.” So the failure means that the Jewish nation, not Jewish individuals because some Jews accepted Him, but as a nation they said no to Jesus when He offered Himself as the King of the nation. Jesus said, you’re kingdom will come if you will accept Me as your King. And they said no, and so therefore because they said no, Jesus Christ was crucified and salvation went to the Gentiles. This is their failure, it means “riches for the world,” it means riches for you and it means riches for me, it means the salvation cup has overflowed to us Gentiles.

But in verse 12 there’s something else. “how much more, if their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be!” That is, how much more Gentile salvation will there be when the Jews reach “their fulfillment?” What is the “fulfillment” of Israel? The fulfillment of Israel is their national confession. When Israel makes a national confession of the transgression: we rejected Jesus our Messiah. When Israel nationally, not just individual, individual Jews as are doing this today, not just individual Jews, but when they nationally confesses this, officially she will accept Jesus as her Messianic King, that’s “their fulfillment.” “how much more” riches will come to the Gentiles. An immensity of blessing will be poured out, speaking of the Millennial Kingdom and all the blessings that will come upon the Gentiles in that kingdom.

Rom 11:13, “But I am speaking to you who are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, ¹⁴if somehow I might move to jealousy my fellow countrymen and save some of them. ¹⁵For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead?” In other words, Paul’s ministry to the Gentiles was, in his eyes crucial to the salvation of His own nation, the nation Israel. And so we still await their acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, the national confession of Jesus Christ. In the meantime Paul magnifies his ministry to the Gentiles because that’s the evangelism program for this era of history. Gentiles will evangelize Jews. And if that’s the case Paul says then I want as many Gentile believers on the streets as possible because that will get the Jewish people responding to Jesus.

Now when we come to Gal 4:4 we have the background so we can see exactly what's happened. **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.** Who did Jesus Christ come and offer Himself too? The nation Israel. That's what this is talking about. These verses are talking about His coming to the nation Israel at the specific time set by the Father. All those early passages we read in the Gospels where Jesus said, don't throw your pearls to swine, don't go in the way of the Gentiles, all of that is the period of verses 4-5. Jesus was a Jew and Jesus came to redeem the Jews. They were the one's verse 5 describes as **under the Law**. And we've been through Matthew, we know how it turned out, they said Jesus was attracted to all the crud of Satan. So they rejected Jesus as the redeemer and Jesus went to the cross. What that does is open up the floodgates of salvation to the Gentiles and that's verses 6-7, salvation opens up to the Gentiles who were once slaves and they're given new status through faith in Christ. They're exalted to the status of sons, sons by adoption. So their rejection has become our riches.

And that's what we want to look at in these verses. So let's start with the Jews in verse 4. **But when the fullness of the time came.** We already know the time; the verse defines it very specifically as Jesus' birth. Some scholars say this looks back to Daniel 9 and the 70 weeks of Daniel, the most fascinating prophecy of the OT. God gave Israel a 490 year calendar. The first 483 years some say concluded with the birth of Jesus and that's why it says **when the fullness of the time came**, they say the fullness of time equals those first 483 years. I'm not inclined to agree but I read David Cooper's book *Messiah His First Coming Scheduled* which details this position, it's a fascinating study, very detailed, you have to go into a lot of detail on the Persian period and how the calendar was back-calculated based on some 2nd century AD observations by an astronomer named Ptolemy. But even if Daniel doesn't refer to this, it does refer to Jesus' birth, a unique birth. Notice the two expressions that describe it, it sounds a lot like Isa 9:6 that we cite around Christmas time, "a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us." That's the background of Paul's statement. He says the same thing, so this is OT theology. God would **send forth His Son**, a child would be **born of a woman**, that was known, now it's happened. This unique person has come into the world.

He's totally unique and this enters us into the fray of the uniqueness of the Hypostatic Union and the Eternal Generation of the Son. One thing you must say just by looking at the expression **God sent forth His Son** is that if God sent Him forth He was already in existence. He didn't come into existence at this point in time. He was already the Son. So this at least proves the pre-existence of the Son. He pre-existed His birth. And other passages teach that He was more than a pre-existing Son, He was eternally God's Son, that's an expression vital to a right understanding of the Trinity. Jesus is the eternal Son of God.

Now once you've said that you're already into the Trinity and by that we mean that God is one in essence and three in person; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Those are ontological statements about the being of God, they are not economical statements. Economically the Father did not send forth Himself, He sent forth His Son. Economically the Father was not crucified on the cross, the Son was crucified on the cross. Economically the Father is not the one involved in our spiritual growth; the Spirit is involved in our spiritual growth. So you have these two facets you can talk about. God's operations within His own being or essence, that's what we call ontology. And God's operations with respect to creation, that's what we call economy. So ontologically the Father, Son and Spirit are sovereign, righteous, just, loving, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, immutable, eternal, indivisible God. In person they are three and they have various roles with respect to function relative to creation.

Now these kinds of things were carefully articulated at the Council of Chalcedon in 451AD. The articulation there did not just come about because some guys were eating a sandwich one day and said, hey, why don't we write down what we think about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. That council convened because Satan keeps attacking the character of God and maligning Him, and so as the church saw new errors creep in they would respond to this by very carefully exegeting the Scriptures and formulating what the Scriptures taught. We shouldn't shun those councils and what they said, those are very succinct, careful doctrinal articulations of what the Scriptures are teaching to keep out the heresy.

So we see that Jesus is God's son, eternally. And that means we can't deprecate Jesus down to semi-God status. He's fully God. Yet He's not only God. We have something else, Jesus is **born of a woman**, and this deals with His humanity conceived by the Holy Spirit in the virgin Mary. Jesus was a true human. He had a true human body, a true human spirit and He was a true human soul or person (albeit, without sin). And we've had errors here too. We have people trying to get Jesus to be semi-human, solely human.

So the early church had these errors and so in AD325 they came together for a council at Nicea and this is what they came up with.

“We [believe in one God](#), the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father [the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father;” So you can see they were having to deal with heresies related to Jesus' divinity, and it's right here they're clamping down. “By whom all things were made [both in heaven and on earth];” See, not the first creation as your local Jehovah's Witness wants to say, that's the ancient heresy of Arianism. It was refuted in the 4th century. Let's go on, “Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man;” So here the humanity of Christ is being defended. They already faced the manipulations. “He suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Ghost.” That's all they said about the Holy Spirit until 381, they weren't clear yet. “[But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.]” So they were very serious about keeping out heresy, maintaining orthodoxy. Catholic there, lowercase catholic just means universal, it just refers to all the believers in Jesus Christ, it has nothing to do with the Roman Catholic Church which came later. Really the Roman Catholic Church didn't begin until AD600. So that's not an issue here. This is just men grappling with the text trying to articulate passages like Gal 4:4, **God sent forth His Son, born of a woman**. And they did a heck of a job doing that, clarifying the issues and rejecting dangerous distortions of the truth. Satan deals in distortions because if it's 99% right then most people

won't recognize the error. The problem is it's that 1% that will kill you. So you have to be so discerning, you have to know the truth, you have to have the doctrine.

So now we have **the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son**, by the way, that verb for sent forth means to be sent on a mission, he wasn't sent to just come down and take a look around, he was sent to fulfill a mission, it was a mission to the Jewish people as we've seen, and that mission is declared in verse five. It's very important to recognize that you can talk Jesus all you want, but if you don't have the Jesus of verse 4 the rest doesn't matter. Jesus is the God-man in hypostasis, He had a true divine nature and he had a true human nature in one person without confusion, mixture or division forever, and that's hard stuff, but that's the Jesus Paul's talking about in verse 4. Once we have the right Jesus then we can talk about what Jesus did. Verse 5, **so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons**. Who was under the Law? The Jews, so He says the mission was first **that He might redeem** the Jews. They were under the curse of the Law, they were under the penalty of sin and they were in the slave market of sin and Paul says Jesus came as one from outside the slave market of sin, one sent forth by God, born of a woman, the sinless God-man, to purchase or redeem out of the slave market of sin the nation Israel. So to make that purchase, and this is the Greek word *exagorazo*, *agorazo* just means "to purchase" but the prefix *ex* means "out of," and he's talking not just about paying the purchase price but paying the purchase price and removing the nation Israel out of the slave market of sin, removing them from sin's penalty. With the further purpose, **that we might receive the adoption as sons**, that purpose didn't happen on a national scale for Israel, that only happened on an individual scale for Jews that believed. But the purpose was that the entire nation Israel would receive the adoption as sons. That just didn't take place in the 1st century, which is why we have verse 6, the floodgates of salvation opened to the Gentiles.

Gal 4:6, **Because you are sons**, and notice the shift from **we** in verse 5, that's the Jews, to **you** in verse 6, that's the Gentiles. **Because you Gentiles are sons**. How did they become sons? Gal 3:26, "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus." The same way as a Jew. They were also justified by faith in Christ Jesus, Gal 2:16, "knowing that a man is not justified by works of the Law but by faith in Christ Jesus." And third, they

also received the Spirit by faith in Christ, Gal 3:14, “so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” So both Jew and Gentile, Slave and Free, Male and Female are justified by faith, received the Spirit by faith and became sons by faith. Paul is very clear that it is by faith. Now look, don’t speed through this, because this is significant. Consider your status as a Gentile in verse 1. You were a slave and a slave has no rights, no inheritance, no nothing, you spit on slaves, slaves are pigs, slaves are dogs, but now that Israel has rejected Jesus as the Messiah the doorway into the full rights of sonship have been opened so that all who have faith in Christ Jesus are adopted into the inner circle of the family, they have full status as sons.

This is the way it was in Roman adoption. If a father wanted to adopt an outsider into his family as a son he had every right to do so. If you’ve seen the movie Ben Hur with Charlton Heston you remember how the Roman ruler wanted to adopt Ben Hur. Ben Hur was a Jewish slave of the Roman Empire, he was shackled in chains and working the ships but in a battle he got loose and rescued a Roman ruler and eventually this ruler wanted to adopt him as his own son. And he gave him his ring and insignia and had a big party for him and extended to him the full rights as a son; he would inherit everything of that Roman ruler. Well, that’s the background of what Paul is saying here. We Gentiles were that slave and we had nothing and yet Christ died for us and He offers every human being full rights as a son and an inheritance simply by faith in Him. And when we believe in Him the Holy Spirit is given to us as a down payment assuring us of the ultimate inheritance we will receive in the Millennial Kingdom (Rom 8:19-23).

Without rushing ahead we want to deal with the expression “**Abba! Father!**” This is the Spirit crying this out as we can tell by the gender agreement. The Spirit that God has sent **into our hearts is crying, “Abba! Father!”** Now the word **Abba** means “father” so it means Father, Father, but it’s a term of intimacy, it’s a word that would be used only by one in the inner circle of the family. If you just think of your family the only one who would refer to the father as Abba would be one of his children either naturally born or adopted, both have full status. It’s sort of a desperate cry for help, when a little boy or girl says Papa, if you just help me here, I really need you. Turn to Mark 14:36 because this is a rare term and we want to get the flavor of how it’s used. This is the Lord Jesus Christ and scholars think the Lord Jesus Christ used this all the time because the Lord Jesus Christ came under severe pressure

situations. V 36, “And He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.” Now what’s the situation the Lord Jesus Christ is in at this moment? He’s praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. It’s the night of His betrayal. The Roman authorities are armed and approaching. Jesus Christ is on the verge of being arrested and taken to the cross. And here his best friends are, Peter, James and John, they can’t even stay awake. They’re konked out on a rock and their best friend, Jesus Christ, is about to be ripped away from them. And if you naively think that Jesus had it easier than you look at verse 34, “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death;” Anyone that said Jesus Christ never had stress hasn’t read the Bible too well. Jesus Christ had stress; stress isn’t sinful, Jesus Christ had stress you never dreamed of. You know what it was that made it so stressful? He never gave into the temptations. Jesus Christ never sinned. Go try that one, you’ll blow up, the temptation is like an expanding balloon, something’s got to give and it just expands and expands and eventually you explode. And this is Jesus Christ and his balloon was expanding and it was on the verge of exploding but it never did. Jesus Christ handled the pressure, extreme pressure you and I will never experience. And it’s that kind of a situation that issues forth expressions like verse 36, “Abba! Father!” Help Me here, I’m in a situation, I can’t handle on my own, I need you Papa.

Now that we have become sons of God you know what we have available to us? Turn to Rom 8, this is talking about the Holy Spirit indwelling us and one of His ministries for us, and notice in verse 15, “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!’” One of the things that the Holy Spirit gives is a sense of intimacy with the Father, that word “Abba” we said in our society is dada, or papa, and it’s a very startling thing that at this point we have that sense of closeness to the Father. Verse 16, “The [Holy] Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” Then after all that, ooh gee, that’s great we can get on with things, notice in verse 18ff, we have all of this groaning, this anxiety, this futility, and the consequences of living in a world in which we have struggles. Then comes verse 26, this is the passage I want to get to, “And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.” That’s the translation I have, but if you look at the Greek term here and do a study on

it, what you come up with...some people think verse 26 is saying that when you start to pray the Holy Spirit will empower you to pray a certain prayer. That's not exactly what this is saying; the words "groanings too deep for words" was a term that was used in Greek fraternities and secret societies for passwords. The flavor of the word is that the Holy Spirit prays on, what the military calls, a secure line. When you go on a secure line you're still communicating, it's just that other people can't hear what's being said. The intriguing sense of verse 26 is that it appears to say that the Holy Spirit is praying along with us in the middle of all these trials in the previous verses, but He's praying on a secure line, He's inside us, so the prayer comes from within us, back up into heaven to the Father's throne. We are not privy to what's said on that line. And Paul says, you're not privy to this, but just know there's a secure line between the Spirit and the Father, and be comforted because He's there praying prayers we haven't even dreamed of to get us through this difficulty. Why do we have this? Because, think about it, when you get in a jam you say, this is the problem here and you start directing your prayer over here at this thing, and there's nothing wrong with that. It's just that there are probably 101 other issues going on simultaneously that we don't even have a clue are there and so the Holy Spirit, who is omniscient, and has a grasp on all the other issues, he pitches in to deal with all that other stuff that we can't see. And so this is a word of comfort. Isn't it nice to know that you can pray but for all the stuff you're missing there is One who prays for all the stuff you don't know. Some things we probably won't ever know or maybe someday when we get the Lord He'll say, remember back when you were going through this, and you prayed this, let Me show you what was really going on when you were in the middle of that, and let me show you the prayer that My Holy Spirit prayed for you, all the little details of your life.

So to conclude we Gentiles have been given fantastic privileges. It's something we should never mistake, never take lightly. We were slaves, pagans without God in the world and God took us and adopted us and gave us full rights as sons, gave us the Holy Spirit to minister in fantastic ways to us, many unknown, but He's there and He teaches us, He prays for us, He does marvelous things for us. It doesn't relieve us of the responsibility of studying and praying, it's just that we simply can't do it all by ourselves and so it's a comfort to know He's at work.

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