

The Adoption of Sons

A 3-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®
Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

"The Adoption of Sons" is a foundational three-lesson primer on the doctrine of sonship in this Dispensation of Grace. Drawing primarily from Romans 8:14–15 and Galatians 4:1–7, Keith Blades carefully distinguishes between being a child of God through regeneration and being a son of God — the special dispensational treatment God gives His heirs today. Sonship is shown to be a dispensational privilege: one that Israel did not possess under the law and will not receive until the Kingdom is established. In this dispensation, God deals with believers not as children under tutors and governors but as adult sons with liberty, intimate access to the Father, and the responsibility to discern His will personally. This series lays the groundwork for understanding and walking in the full privilege of the sonship position God has given every member of the Body of Christ.



www.enjoythebible.org

Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
Lesson 1	Introducing the distinction between being a child of God and being a son of God in this Dispensation of Grace
Lesson 2	Examining the tutor-and-governor principle of the law and how God now deals with His heirs as adult sons
Lesson 3	Walking as sons — freedom from fear-motivation, intimacy with the Father, and discerning God's will personally

Lesson Summaries

L1

Sonship Introduced *Children vs. Sons — Laying the Doctrinal Foundation*

- The series addresses the doctrine of our sanctified position in Christ, rooted in Romans 6–8, specifically the reality of sonship introduced in Romans 8:14–15
- Romans 8:14–15 presents two key realities: being “led by the Spirit” as the mark of sons, and the “Spirit of adoption” contrasted with the “spirit of bondage” (the law)

Four Uses of 'Sons of God' in Scripture

- The concept "sons of God" has different usages in Scripture; Paul's usage in Romans 8 is distinct from the family-membership use found elsewhere
 - John 1:12 refers to regeneration — becoming members of God's family by faith; Paul's use in Romans 8 refers to a specific dispensational treatment as adult sons
- Romans 8:16–17 distinguishes "children of God" (heirs by regeneration) from "sons of God" (heirs treated as adults) — these are not synonymous in Paul's epistles

Sonship Is a Dispensational Issue

- No believer before the Dispensation of Grace — not Abraham, Moses, David, nor even Peter, James, or John — was ever treated by God as a son; all were under the law and therefore under the tutor-and-governor system as children
 - Sonship belongs exclusively to this dispensation; it is part of the riches of grace God has given through the revelation of the Mystery
- Galatians 4:1–6 defines the contrast: an heir under tutors and governors "differeth nothing from a servant"; sonship means the Father now deals with his heir as an adult with full liberty
- The cross work of Christ provided the basis for God to begin dealing with His heirs as sons; this began when He ushered in the Dispensation of Grace through the commission of the Apostle Paul (Acts 9)

The Tutor-and-Governor Principle *Understanding Childhood Under Law and Liberty Under Grace*

- God has dealt with His heirs on two systems: childhood under tutors and governors (law/times past), and sonship as adult sons (grace/but now)

The Tutor

- The tutor was entrusted with the child's basic education and employed fear-based discipline; the motivating factor for obedience under this system was fear of cursing, judgment, and chastisement

The Governor

- The governor oversaw the child's life at all times, making decisions on the child's behalf and restricting independent liberty — where to go, what to do, what is permitted
 - The child "differeth nothing from a servant" (Galatians 4:1) — controlled, restricted, with no freedom to make independent decisions

The Meaning of 'Adoption'

- Paul's word "adoption" (*huiothesia* = placing of a son) does not mean taking in a stranger — it means formally placing one's own offspring in the position and privileges of an adult son

Warning: Doctrines of Devils

- 1 Timothy 4:1–3 warns that seducing spirits and doctrines of devils will use Israel's tutor-governor principles (forbidding to marry, abstaining from meats) against Body of Christ members
 - Any doctrine that places believers under external authority structures, fear-based compliance, or another person's determination of God's will functions like the tutor-and-governor system

L2

L3

Dispensational Placement

- Romans 9:4 — “the adoption” pertains to Israel as a yet-future Kingdom blessing; in this dispensation, God has made Gentile believers partakers of it now by the riches of His grace through the Mystery
- Galatians 4:6–7 — “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”

The Sonship Walk *Liberty, Motivation, and Discerning God’s Will as Sons*

- The rapture will publicly manifest believers as sons of God in the heavenly places; right now the Spirit of adoption enables believers to function as sons to God’s honor and glory today
- 1 Corinthians 6:1–3 — saints will judge the world and govern angels; Paul appeals to the Corinthians to act like sons NOW by handling disputes among themselves rather than going to ungodly courts

Three Contrasts: Childhood Walk vs. Sonship Walk

- 1. Motivation — Under law: fear of punishment drives obedience; under grace: love and gratitude for what Christ has done is the motivating factor
- 2. Fellowship — Under tutors and governors, restricted access to the Father; as sons, direct intimate access — “Abba Father”
- 3. Discerning God’s Will — Under law, a hierarchy of judges and the Urim and Thummim determined God’s will for the individual; as sons, believers are expected to discern God’s will personally through doctrine resident in the soul (Romans 12:1–2)

Grace as the Motivator

- Titus 2:11–14 — “The grace of God that bringeth salvation” teaches us to live soberly, righteously, and godly; Christ gave Himself to redeem us and purify a peculiar people “zealous of good works” — not through threats but through what He has done
- The flesh actually prefers the tutor-and-governor system because that system gives the flesh strength to operate; appreciating the grace privilege of sonship is what moves believers to cry “Abba Father” in joyful recognition of their liberty
- God expects His sons to make decisions regarding His will in the details of their life; renewing the mind to prove what is “the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2) is the sonship walk in practice

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Children vs. Sons

All believers are children of God by regeneration — members of God’s family through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26). But in this Dispensation of Grace, believers are also positioned as sons — adult heirs dealt with in liberty, not under the law’s tutor-and-governor system. Being a child and being a son are not

synonymous in Paul’s epistles. Romans 8:14–17 carefully distinguishes the two: all are children (heirs by regeneration), but sons are those treated by God as adults with the Spirit of adoption rather than the spirit of bondage.

Sonship Is Dispensational

No believer before this Dispensation of Grace was ever treated by God as a son. Israel’s heirs — Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, James, and John — were all under the law’s tutor-and-governor principle and therefore dealt with as children. Romans 9:4 establishes that “the adoption” pertains to Israel as a yet-future Kingdom blessing. The Body of Christ receives it now by the riches of grace through the revelation of the Mystery. This is a dispensational privilege no one possessed before the Dispensation of Grace began.

The Tutor-and-Governor Principle

The law functioned as a two-part system for dealing with God’s heirs as children. Tutors provided fear-based education and discipline — the strap was always present, and failure meant swift judgment. Governors made decisions for the child and restricted independent liberty. As sons, believers are free from both. This distinction is critical for identifying false teaching: any doctrine that places Body of Christ members under external authority structures, fear-based compliance, or the need for another to determine God’s will is functioning like the tutor-and-governor system — the very thing Paul warns against in 1 Timothy 4:1–3.

Grace as Motivator — Not Fear

Under the law, the motivating factor for obedience was fear of cursing, judgment, and chastisement. Under grace, the motivator is love and gratitude for what Christ has done. Titus 2:11–14 makes clear that it is the grace of God — not threats of discipline — that teaches believers to live soberly and godly. Christ gave Himself to redeem and purify a people zealous of good works. As Keith states plainly: if grace is not motivating you, God is not motivating you.

Key Scripture References

Romans 8:14–15	Foundational text on sonship: sons are led by the Spirit and have received the Spirit of adoption, not the spirit of bondage
Romans 8:16–17	Distinguishes children of God (heirs) from sons; joint-heirship with Christ is conditional on suffering with Him
Galatians 4:1–7	Core passage: the heir as child under tutors and governors vs. son placed in adult liberty; Christ redeemed us that we might receive the adoption of sons
Romans 9:4	“The adoption” pertains to Israel as a yet-future Kingdom blessing; the Body of Christ is made partakers of it now by grace
1 Corinthians 6:1–3	Saints will judge the world and govern angels; Paul appeals to act like sons

	now in making decisions rather than going to ungodly courts
Titus 2:11–14	The grace of God teaches godly living; motivation is Christ's redemptive work, not fear of judgment
John 1:11–13	Regeneration and becoming members of God's family by faith — distinct from Paul's sonship usage in Romans 8
1 Timothy 4:1–3	Warning against doctrines of devils that impose tutor-and-governor principles (e.g., forbidding to marry, abstaining from meats) on Body of Christ members

For further study visit www.enjoythebible.org