

**Kirkwall Presbyterian Church**  
**'Adoption'**  
**Malachi 3:16-18; Galatians 3:26-4:7**  
**February 22, 2026**  
**By Keith Marcy**

From age 18-21 I was employed by the Massey-Ferguson dealer in Galt. Frequently I was sent to a farm near Ayr to repair equipment. I was there so often I grew to know the family well. They lived on a rented farm. Their income came from doing custom work. Machinery repairs took care of most of their profit! They had a son about 12 and two daughters aged 10 and 8. And then there was Scotty, a blond, curly-haired, energetic 2-year-old. Scotty had lived with them from the age of a few weeks. His biological mother was a young, single teenage girl. Scotty's father was nowhere to be found. His future looked grim – no father for material support or fatherly example or training. A mother who loved her baby but lacked maturity to care for him. His care by the neighboring family began with an evening of babysitting which quickly became a daily event. By the time Scotty was 6 months old, their home was Scotty's home.

But they lived in fear – fear that someday his grandparents or his aunts and uncles would show up and take the little fellow away from them. If they resisted, they could be charged with abduction since legally they had no rights to the child. At about aged two, they began to try to adopt Scotty so the little fellow would not be taken by the children's aid and assigned to a foster home. Proceedings went very slowly. They hired a lawyer. Scotty turned three. I will never forget the day I was repairing a combine in their outdoor shop. Two bright shiny cars were sitting by their house. After an hour or so, a man and a woman dressed in business attire left in the vehicles. A while later our customer walked down to me. His voice was soft with emotion. "Scotty belongs to us. We just signed the papers. No one can take him away. Legally he is our son!"

This story is true. It illustrates an important aspect of our spiritual life. Like Scotty, we were born into a cruel world. Our natural spiritual father was Satan. He did not love us. He had one main goal – to keep us from a heavenly Father who would love us. We were born with a propensity – an

inclination – to sin. The more we sin the happier Satan is because it puts a great barrier between us and God.

Scotty was born into a life of uncertainty. Who would look after him?

Spiritually we were worse off because we had Satan luring us away from the One who wanted to help us.

Earlier Ralph read some beautiful words from the Scripture. He read. *“But when the fullness of time had come, God...”* **“But God!”** Whenever we see those words in the Bible, we know God is going to intervene in history. He is going to do something.

What did He do? He sent His Son, born of a woman who was Mary. Jesus was both divine – the Son of God – and human – born of Mary.

Why did God send Him? To redeem – meaning to buy us back – people created in God’s image but caught in this world of sin.

How did He redeem us? He redeemed us by taking our sin as though it was His sin and dying for them. On the cross the sin of the world was laid on Him and He died and all who believe that are bought back by God who loved us. Scotty’s lot in life was changed because a neighboring couple had compassion for him. They loved him. They opened their home and their very lives to him – dirty diapers, interrupted sleep, teething pain, temper tantrums – at a time in their lives when those things were behind them. But their action was motivated by love and nothing else! No one paid them to look after the little boy.

So it happens, that God redeemed us from our filth because we paid Him?

No! We had nothing to pay with! He redeemed us because He loved us.

And the second, the very second when we called in desperation, *“Lord, I need you,”* God adopted us.

I am sorry the editors of the NIV Bible changed the word *‘adopted’* to *‘receive the full rights of sons.’* I know they were trying to explain the meaning. *‘Adopted’* is a more powerful word.

What changed for Scotty the day the adoption papers were signed?

- There was a loving woman he could call *‘Mom.’*

- There was a man who loved him, dirty hands and face and all, whom he could call ‘Dad.’
- He had a brother and two sisters who adored him.
- He received a new surname because he was part of a family.
- His official mom and dad could call him, ‘Son.’

Materially speaking there was not much – a yard of worn-out machinery. But there was unconditional love. There was admiration. There was hope. There was emotional security.

What changes for those who believe in Jesus when they are adopted into the family of God?

- They can call the Creator of the universe their Dad – *Abba – Father*.
- They become a joint heir with Jesus of all that God has made.
- They gain a host of siblings who have like minds – who believe there is one God who loves them.
- They have eternal security. Jesus put it this way in John 10, *“I give them eternal life and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”*

What else? Revelation declares we will be given a new name that will be inscribed on our foreheads.

Scholars have not determined what that name will be except that it will be a mark meaning we belong to God.

On the beef farm where I worked, we received many cattle from the West. Many were branded. From that brand we could trace the animal to the original owner.

Our new name, whatever it is, will be a mark of ownership – a mark signifying that we are sons or daughters of Jehovah—for eternity!

*‘Adoption!’* –for a believer in Jesus means we have become a child of God—because He chose us!!!

Praise His Holy Name!