

Salvation Belongs to the Lord – Adoption

In 1 John 3:1 the Apostle says: “**See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.**” Today, if you are a Christian, if you have believed on the Lord Jesus, you are a child of God. In John 1:12 he also says, “**But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God . . .**” What a beautiful topic to preach this morning! Any preacher I know would love to preach on this subject! (And I’m not sure I’ve ever preached on it topically.) But, this week, what a blessing for ME to study and to consider How to present it to you. As a preacher and as a listener, all of us will rejoice together at such a great truth: to be called a child of God!

Before getting directly into what the Bible says about adoption, I want to mention where adoption fits under the umbrella of salvation. Our salvation begins in eternity past as we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. God powerfully calls and regenerates us. Then, with a heart of repentance we believe in the Lord Jesus. After this, we have seen that in Christ, we are justified; we are declared righteous and given the righteousness of Christ. And, in Christ, we are sanctified; we are being sanctified. And one day, we will be glorified (coming in the next sermon). So, where does adoption fall under this umbrella of salvation? Well, I must place it right after faith and repentance because even though Paul says that in “*love he predestined us for adoption*” (Eph. 1:5), we aren’t actually in the family until we believe the gospel (See John 1:12 above). Though mysterious and sometimes hard to grasp when we consider the mind and plan of God, there was a time when you were not a child of God (as we will see). Now, I have 3 parts to this sermon: 1) Adoption is already, but not yet. 2) Adoption means there is a new relationship. 3) Adoption results in the most glorious benefits.

1. Adoption: Already & Not Yet. While adoption occurs as a result of faith in Jesus Christ, it is important to note that the Bible speaks of our adoption as past, present, and future. What do I mean by this?

First, the past. In Eph. 1:4-6 we read: “**even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.**” Here we see that our adoption began in the mind and decree of God in eternity past, before the foundation of the world. This means that predestination is the ORIGIN of our adoption as sons and daughters. This means that adoption is due to God’s free grace alone. There is no room for boasting. God did not look down through time and see that you would be a good candidate. He did not see the future and say, “*Billy or Sally will make a good decision one day.*” He didn’t say, “*I’d really like to have a dark-skinned athletic girl, or a tall white girl from Scandinavia.*” No, God does not discriminate in that way. Though it is a mystery, the free grace of God in adoption includes the entire world, male and female, black and white, rich and poor. And from this perspective, God’s

people have always been those He has set his special love upon. (lots of verses to support this truth)

The Bible also speaks of adoption in the present. What do I often call you in my sermons? (Brothers and Sisters) Why? Because RIGHT NOW, in the present, we are God's children! This is the primary emphasis of the Bible when it comes to adoption. Rom. 8:15-16 says, "**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, as we've already seen in John 1:12: "**But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**" This means that RIGHT NOW, if you have received the Lord Jesus, if you have believed in Him, you are a child of God.

Also, the Bible speaks of our adoption as a future reality. In Rom. 8:23 Paul says, "**And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.**" Here, Paul links the future resurrection of our bodies to our adoption as sons. In Phil. 3:20-21 he says, "**But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.**" As those who have been predestined to adoption as Sons, As those who are now adopted in Jesus Christ, we also wait for the consummation when our adoption will be complete. Past, Present, and Future. How glorious is this truth!

2. Adoption: A New Relationship. When you think of adoption as a part of your salvation what do you understand? What do you think about most when it comes to the fact that you are adopted into the family of God? You may be tempted to think that adoption is like regeneration. After all, Jesus says if you want to see the kingdom of God, "***you must be born again***" (John 3:3). Here he speaks about birth, which implies being born into a family. But, adoption is not about "natural" birth. Adoption is more like justification. It is a legal act. It is something that God does. As John 1:12 says, He "***gave you the right to be called a child of God***." To illustrate the difference, think of how birth and adoption work in a human family. With that which is natural, a mother physically gives birth. With adoption, a second child, not physically an offspring is transferred or brought into the family, not by birth, but by a legal process. And this child gets a new legal status. And, this child gets a new relationship with his or her new family.

Now, I think most of us, when we think about adoption, we experience various emotions of goodwill. There is something about a family adopting a child (or children) that warms our hearts, that makes us say, "I'm really happy for that child" and "for those parents." Why? Because in order for there to be an adoption, there must be children who do not have a place to live; due to certain circumstances they do not have a family, and no possibility of having a family outside of adoption. This means they have no relationship with a mother and father. I think of some of our

best friends who adopted from an orphanage in the Ukraine (tell story of M & J). I can hardly hold my emotions when I think of these kinds of stories.

Well, in the same kind of way, we are adopted into the family God. We have been given new legal status, and with this new status comes the most beautiful relationship with a new Father and a new family. Let's think for a moment how the Bible describes us BEFORE we were adopted. In Eph. 2, Paul reminds the Ephesians and us of their previous state, both legally and relationally. Vv. 1-2: "**And you were dead in the trespass and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world.**" And then he says, "**following the prince of the power of the air.**" V. 3: "**Among who we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.**"

Brothers and sisters, though the Bible speaks of us as "God's offspring" in a general sense (See Paul's sermon in Acts 17:28), in and of ourselves, we are not God's children! In v. 12 he says, "**remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers . . . having NO HOPE and without God in the world.**" In the rest of that chapter, he says we were living a state of "hostility." There was no lasting "peace" as our earthly family could not provide it. He says we were "strangers" and "aliens." (vv. 16-19).

Well, as God's new adopted children, we find a new legal status that results in a relationship. As God's child, you are no longer "dead" in your sins. No more do you walk after and follow the ways of your old family in the world, nor your old father the devil. No longer does the world's orphanage dictate how you live. Instead of a child of wrath, you are a child of God. You are no longer separated, alienated, and without hope. There is no more hostility. You are no longer a stranger or alien. Now you have peace.

I think of the parable in Matt. 22 and Luke 14 as God gives the most beautiful wedding garments to those who are unworthy, those who come from the streets, the highways and the hedges, the poor, the crippled, the lame, that they may attend the wedding feast of the king. So it is brother and sisters with us. God has given us a "robe" of righteousness, a new "status" in Christ. Because we have been declared "righteous" in the court of law, we now have the right to the Castle; we don't merely attend the feast, we enter the mansion; it is now our home.

We are like the prodigal son who spent all his father's money in sinful indulgence, who comes home and finds a loving father who RUNS to him, prepares a feast, gives him his own ring, and clothes him in an expensive robe!. As the prodigal son come home, we have a new robe, we eat the fattened calf, we put the Father's ring on our finger, we celebrate at his feast on our behalf. And, as the children of God, we have the greatest jewel of all "Knowing the Father."

(Recall the story of *The King & I*) The world does not have such a status nor such a relationship.

3. Adoption: Glorious Gospel Benefits. So, what are our benefits? What do we receive from our Father? There are many. But, I will mention 10 (taken straight from Scripture)

- i. We can now pray directly to the Father (Matt. 6:9)
- ii. We are no longer slaves, but sons (Gal. 4:7).
- iii. God gives us the Holy Spirit and assurance that we are his children (Rom. 8:14-16). This means the Holy Spirit comforts us and even empowers us to live the Christian life (Luke 11:13).
- iv. As his children, our Father takes care of our needs (Matt. 6:32).
- v. Because we are his children our Father gives us good gifts (Matt. 7:11).
- vi. As children, and as fellow heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17; Heb. 2:11-13), we have an inheritance that is eternal, imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for us (1 Pet. 1:4; cf. Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; Heb. 1:14).
- vii. As adopted children, we approach our Father, asking him to forgive our sins (Matt. 6:9-12). This means we have confidence that our relationship is always restored when we have sinned against Him (1 John 1:9; 3:19-22).
- viii. As his children we are led, guided, and directed by the Spirit of God in holiness (Rom. 8:14).
- ix. As children of God we are no longer punished as unbelievers, but we receive the loving discipline of our heavenly Father who desires to see us walk in holiness (Heb. 12:5-10; cf. Eph. 5:1; Phil. 2:15; 1 Peter 1:14-16; 1 John 3:10).
- x. Those adopted by God will not only share in the sufferings of Christ but in his glory (Rom. 8:17)

Application: Obedience for the child of God flows from a heart that knows God has our best at heart. This means that our obedience is not “law” based but “relationship” based. If you have a good relationship with your earthly father and he tells you to do something, how do you respond? You respond with “yes!” and “*that’s what I want!*” Even when I don’t like it or understand all things (which we don’t), knowing that God our Father knows best. I think of Job who received both good and bad from his loving father. Also know that God does not judge us; nor does He pour out his wrath upon us. But, he does discipline his children for our good!

In closing, we know that All of our blessings as the children of God flow down to us through the person and work of Jesus Christ. In the NT our adoption is linked to “faith in Christ” (John 1:12). And consider what price has been paid for your adoption: the blood of Christ. Let me close with Eph. 1:3-14.