

life group study guide

“This is Home – Adopted Children”

June 2, 2013



Galatians 3:23-4:7, Romans 8:15-23, Ephesians 1:5

In Life Groups, kids, youth and adults study God's Word together and discuss the issues and challenges of life.

Introduction

Before we look at texts that speak of Christians as God's adopted children, read the two Scriptures and three song excerpts below:

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! 1 John 3:1, NIV

*“How deep the Father's love for us,
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure”*
Stuart Townend

*“Children of God, sing your song and rejoice
For the love that He has given us all, oh, whoa,
Children of God, by the blood of His Son
We have been redeemed and we can be called
Children of God . . .”*

Third Day

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” Luke 15:20, NIV

*“Who are the treasured and the prized? Who is the apple of God's eye? Who is?
We are, we are, we are.
Who are the ones who bear His name? Who are the children He has claimed as His?
We are, we are, we are.
The ones God has sent His Son to rescue, and now He calls us His own.
We are the children of God. We are the children of God.
We are the sons and daughters; Almighty God is our Father.”*
Steven Curtis Chapman

Q: What does it mean to you to be called a “child of God?” What rights, responsibilities, privileges, and/or duties might be a part of that relationship?

Q: What would be so valuable that you would give your only child to redeem (i.e., buy back)? The New Testament says over and over that this is exactly what God has done for us. In one sentence or less, what is your response to knowing that you are “His treasure?”

Q: In what way is the message of the Third Day song true – that only the redeemed (that is, Christians) can truly be called “children of God?”

Q: What part of the Parable of the Prodigal Son has had the greatest impact on you? What does Luke 15:20 (above) tell us about God, about us, and about our salvation?

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Q: Do you agree with Steven Curtis Chapman that we are “treasured,” “prized,” “the apple of God’s eye?” Do you believe it in both your head and heart? Why or why not?

Q: What does it mean to you that God has “claimed” you or that He “calls us His own?”

Study

Since we’re looking at three different Bible passages today, we will keep it rather brief and try to hit the high points – especially on what it means to be God’s adopted sons and daughters:

I. From slavery to adoption: Galatians 3:23-4:7; Ephesians 1:5.

Notes from Gal 3:23-29:

- The law as “guardian”: God never intended for any law code (Mosaic Law, Ten Commandments, etc.) to be a way of salvation. Law reveals the holiness of God and helps to restrain evil, but since no person can keep it perfectly, it also reveals to them their need for a Savior. The OT law thus served to prepare the world for the coming of Christ.
- The “faith” that Paul speaks of in verses 23-26 is faith in Christ. OT saints were saved by faith as well (see Gen 15:6 and Hebrews 11), but their faith was in God’s promises since Christ had not been revealed yet.
- Everyone becomes a child of God in the same way – through faith in Christ at the occasion of baptism. That is the real message of verse 28. Paul is not saying that there are no longer any distinctions, but that there is only one way of salvation – through faith in the finished work of Christ. Therefore, all believers are one and part of one body.
- The real descendants of Abraham are not physical, but spiritual – those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

Q: What do you think Paul means when he says in 3:27 that everyone who has been baptized into Christ has “put on Christ?”

Notes from Gal 4:1-7:

- “Basic/elementary principles” in verse 3: Most likely these principles are those things that govern the world apart from Christ. This could be the Mosaic Law, the secular powers of our age, or other spiritual forces (demons, etc.). The point is that, without Christ, everyone is a slave to what governs their age and place: It could be legalism, materialism, false religions, etc.

Q: What are those “principles” that enslave people who are apart from Christ in central Indiana today?

- The “right time” of verse 4: The Incarnation was not an afterthought. God sent His Son at the perfect time – when the world was prepared for His coming.
- Verse 4: “Born of a woman,” “subject to law”: In order to be the Savior of all people, Christ had to be fully human, so He was born in the same manner as we are. He also had to be perfect in obedience, so He was subject to the law. Hebrews 4:15 says that Jesus “faced all of the same testings we do, yet He did not sin.”

Passage Conclusion – Gal 4:5-7: God sent His Son to redeem all who believe in Him (John 3:16, Gal 3:13, 2 Cor 5:21) from the futility of trying to be saved by law-keeping, whether Jew or Gentile. Adoption as God’s “very own children” (verse 5) is being made right with God = salvation = justification = forgiveness of

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sins. But whereas justification means that we are no longer legally guilty, adoption reveals a different facet of salvation – *restored relationship* with our Heavenly Father – therefore we can talk to Him without fear as Jesus did – “*Abba, Father.*” At baptism, the believer also receives the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) which empowers him/her to live increasingly holy lives. We are now truly God’s children and heirs!

Q: What does it mean that God has “adopted” you as His very own child? In an adoption, who does the choosing and who takes the initiative? Read Ephesians 1:5. Have you thought much about the fact that God has chosen you, and that it was all planned thousands of years ago? So maybe some predestination is not so bad after all? Your thoughts?

II. Adoption from beginning to completion: Romans 8:15-23.

In the Galatians text, we saw that by God’s grace through faith we are transferred from slavery into God’s family. When a person believes, repents of sin, confesses Christ, and is baptized – God makes them alive spiritually (regeneration), forgives all their sins (justification), takes them into His family (adoption), and gives them the indwelling Holy Spirit for the life-long process of becoming like Christ (sanctification). In the Galatians passage, Paul also introduces the idea that we are God’s heirs, which means that there is more to come! In Romans 8, perhaps the greatest chapter in the Bible (in my humble opinion), Paul (the apostle, not Paul Harvey) tells us “the rest of the story.” Being a part of God’s family just keeps getting better!

A. The Beginning: Rom 8:15-17

The message here is basically the same as what we saw in Galatians. Believers are no longer slaves but God’s adopted children and have been given the Holy Spirit for power in their Christian walk. What does this mean:

- Sin is no longer inevitable! The Holy Spirit helps us to increasingly “put to death” sinful deeds (8:13).
- As God’s children, we can cry out directly to our Father and He will, like the Father in the Prodigal story, hear us and run to us with compassion.
- We are God’s heirs – and just as Christ has been glorified, so too will we be when He returns.
- Ahem – one more thing. We are obligated to follow Christ, even into suffering if need be.

Q: What does it mean that we are called to suffer with Christ? Is it inevitable or likely or just possible? What do you know about the “Persecuted Church?” Do you know believers who have suffered for their faith in Christ? **Quiz:** (Answers at bottom of last page) About how many Christians are killed each year for their faith (to the nearest 10,000)? About how many Christians have been killed for their faith since the time of Christ (to the nearest million)? How many of the Apostles did not die a martyr’s death?

B. The Completion: Rom 8:18-23

Now this text really takes us somewhere! Paul puts the temporary suffering in this life on one side of the scale and weighs it against the glory of eternity. No contest – in fact, it’s not even worth comparing! What else do we learn here:

- Paul reminds us that all of creation longs to be made new. In the beginning (Gen 1-2), all was perfect and there was a creation order: God – Mankind – The rest of creation. The sin of Adam and Eve (Gen 3) altered that relationship and resulted in a curse not just for them but for all of the

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physical creation. So the present universe is running down (entropy) and is subject to decay and death. Thus all creation has been “in the pains of childbirth” since Genesis 3. The universe is “eagerly awaiting” the “new model” of humanity – sinless, without defect, perfect – because its fate is tied to that of ours.

Q: Do you think much about what the renewed heavens and earth will be like? What excites you the most about this expectation? Do the biblical descriptions help or hinder your picture of heaven and the new creation?

- **Conclusion:** Romans 8:23 – We have the “firstfruits” of adoption now – but its completion will be at the Resurrection when our bodies will be redeemed as our souls are already! Then our “sonship”/“daughtership” will be perfected. We have been adopted but we have yet to receive our inheritance. Paul is telling believers that this inheritance is nothing less than our perfect glorified bodies inhabiting a perfect universe for all eternity! Dr. Jack Cottrell says that this verse teaches us three critical truths:
 1. Physical bodies are a natural and necessary part of human existence . . . We are not redeemed *from* our bodies; our bodies themselves are redeemed.
 2. What happens to our bodies at “the resurrection” is true and complete redemption: This means that *all the effects of sin will be gone; all defects and imperfections will be corrected: the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will run, the mentally handicapped will understand, and amputees will be made whole.* Charles Dickens’ Tiny Tim recognized this promise. Do you remember this scene from *The Christmas Carol*: (Bob Cratchit talking to his wife) – “He [Tim] told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, who made lame beggars walk, and blind men see.”
 3. The context of this text (Romans 6-8) show us that not just the effects of sin, but sin itself will be totally gone! – No more sinful desires or even temptations!

Q: What excites you most about the bodily resurrection that is promised to God’s children? Physical restoration? Perfect holiness? No tears? No pain? No sin or temptation? All of the above?

This perfect adoption as God’s sons and daughters – the “redemption of our bodies” – also means something else – that God is, or at least will be on that day, pleased with us.

*“It is written that we shall “stand before” Him, shall appear, shall be inspected. The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, shall please God. To please God...to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness...to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son—it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.” C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory**

Answers: This data is recent but not necessarily current (i.e., not from 2013). 1. 163,000. 2. 70 million. 3. One – the Apostle John.
Source: <http://markmoore.org/resources/essays/acts/persecution.pdf>