

## Salvation "Adoption" Romans 8:12-17; Galatians 3:23-4:7

### Introduction

- [Slide #1] I have not seen this myself but I am told that if you go to Scotland, or anywhere where they raise a lot of sheep, you'll see this. On farms where there are large flock of sheep you'll often see little lambs running around with extra fleeces tied to their backs. If you see a lamb like that, with an extra fleece on its back, it usually means its mother has died.
- Without outside help orphaned lambs are rejected by the other ewes in the flock. Their scent is unrecognizable; the ewes know the orphaned baby isn't their own and they butt it away. But if one of the ewes in the flock has itself lost a lamb, the shepherd skins that dead lamb and makes a fleece out of the skin and puts it on the orphaned lamb. The ewe will then smell the fleece of her own lamb that has died and accept the orphan as its own.
- In a similar way, we have become acceptable to God by being clothed with Christ.<sup>1</sup> That's justification. When God justifies us we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and we become acceptable to Him. But our salvation is more than just being acceptable to God. God does something more for us. Orphaned by sin, and left for dead, God makes us his own. He adopts us into his family. Through Christ God makes us his son or daughter. When we think about adoption as part of our salvation...[Slide #2]

### Big Idea

- **Adoption is an act of God whereby he makes us members of his family through Christ**
- [Slide #3] If you were to break down how God saves people it would look like this. Election, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, preservation, glorification. Chronologically, adoption happens at the moment of conversion, at the same time he justifies us.
- You might be tempted to think that we become God's children by regeneration since the imagery of being 'born again' makes us think of children being born into a family. But the New Testament never

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<sup>1</sup> From Peter Grant's sermon, "In What Way Is Jesus Christ Different?"; submitted to [www.preachingtoday.com](http://www.preachingtoday.com) by Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky.

connects adoption with regeneration. In fact, the idea of adoption is completely opposite to the idea of being born into a family, isn't it?<sup>2</sup>

- Adoption is distinct from regeneration. “It's possible God could have made us spiritually alive to him through regeneration but not make us part of his family.<sup>3</sup> Think of angels for instance. Angels, spiritual beings created by God, do not share the special privileges and rights of those God calls sons and daughters. Through Christ our status is above that of the angels. We are sons and daughters of the Great High King.
- [Slide #4] **Adoption is an act of God whereby he makes us members of his family through Jesus.** Listen to what **Ephesians 1:4-5** says. *In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- 6 to the praise of his glorious grace.*
- The implications of being adopted into God's family are mind blowing. Think about it for a second. Our adoption means we are loved by God the Father the same way he loves his natural born son Christ Christ. That is staggering. **Hebrews 2:11** says this. *Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers. We are co-heirs with Christ. We are part of the same family as Jesus, with all the rights and privileges he has. We are honored like Christ is honored—every one of us—no matter what.*<sup>4</sup>
- We are sons and daughters without distinction. Once we're adopted it's not like we carry the label “adopted” with us the rest of our lives. “There are no ‘adopted children’ of God, as an ongoing category. Adoption tells us how we came into the family of God. And once we are there, no distinction is drawn between those at the dinner table.”<sup>5</sup> We are adopted and then God gives us all the rights and privileges of a natural born son or daughter.
- In his classic devotional *Knowing God*, **J.I. Packer** says this about adoption. “If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all. For everything that Christ taught, everything that makes the New Testament new, and better than the Old, everything that is

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<sup>2</sup> Grudem, p. 738.

<sup>3</sup> Grudem, p. 738.

<sup>4</sup> Tim Keller, in his sermon "The Christian's Happiness," PreachingToday.com

<sup>5</sup> Russell Moore, “Abba Changes Everything,” *Christianity Today*, July 2010, p.20.

distinctively Christian as opposed to merely Jewish, is summed up in the knowledge of the Fatherhood of God. "Father" is the Christian name for God....Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption."<sup>6</sup>

- So what if your earthly father was all messed up? Must you first experience a corrective human relationship in order to grasp adoption and God as your father? That's what some people say. "I just can't accept God as my father because my human father was such a jerk. I don't want anything to do with fathers of any kind."
- What makes you think God is anything like your human father? Our understanding of adoption is tied to the idea of God as Father. No one in their right mind wants to be adopted into a dysfunctional family with an idiot father. Fortunately, God is nothing of the sort. He is not harsh or stern or severe. He is a father to be trusted. One who acts in our best interest, who gives us good gifts. He is unlike, in every way, your earthly fathers who have failed you and let you down. Can you know God as Father even if your human father was mean, angry, deceptive, cold, aloof, or even just disappointing? Absolutely Yes.
- Someone once said, "For years I thought I could never know God as my Father because I had such a rotten relationship with my dad. But then I realized that my biggest problem was me, not God or my father. My belief system was all messed up. I was projecting lies onto God and not believing what was true about him."<sup>7</sup>
- He's inviting you right now, today, to begin to open your mind to what it means to for him to lovingly adopt you into his family through Jesus and for Him to call you son or daughter. And for those names to not be dirty words but to mean something wonderful.

### Transition

Right now I want to highlight for you...

### Organizational Sentence

- **Six applications or benefits of the doctrine of adoption**

### Transition

Application #1. [Slide #5]

### Main Points

1. **Adoption makes us sons with a royal inheritance**

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<sup>6</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p.201–202.

<sup>7</sup> David Powlison, *God as Father*, p. 13.

- Listen to **Galatians 3:26-4:7**. *You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*
- *4:1 What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. 2 He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. 3 So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. 4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*
- Through faith in Christ God adopts us as sons into a royal family so that we might become heirs with an inheritance. An illustration from Roman law and society serves to make Paul's point in Galatians 3-4.
- In ancient Rome a child didn't come of age until twenty-five. No rights. No privileges as a son until then. Up until twenty-five a male child was under the care of a guardian or trustee, **Galatians 4:2**, a tutor established by the Father of the house. Paul's point is that until the appointed time when the son rightful heir receives the full rights and privileges of his sonship he is no different from the slave. Both slave and son are required to follow the rules and regulations of the house.
- But Christ changes everything. *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.*
- Some people are put off by Paul's language of adoption because it's gender insensitive. **Galatians 3:26**. *You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.* They argue, "Wouldn't it be better to say that we become sons and daughters of God?" Writer, speaker [Tim Keller](#) explains why this is a bad idea.
- Keller says, "Some time ago, a woman helped me understand this. She was raised in a non-Western family from a very traditional culture. There was only one son in the family, and it was understood in her culture that he would receive most of the family's provisions and honor. In essence, they said, 'He's the son; you're just a girl.' That's just the way it was."
- "One day she was studying a passage on adoption in Paul's writings. She suddenly realized that the apostle was making a revolutionary claim. Paul lived in a traditional culture just like she did. He was living in a place where daughters were second-class citizens. When Paul said—

out of his own traditional culture—that we are all sons in Christ, he was saying that there are no second-class citizens in God's family. When you give your life to Christ and become a Christian, you receive all the benefits a son enjoys in a traditional culture....God's subversive and revolutionary promise raises us to the highest honor by adopting us as his sons.”

- We're royal heirs. We're royalty. We are Abraham's seed and royal heirs of the promise of inheriting salvation. That's how God sees you in Christ. How do you see yourself in Christ? What false ideas about God must you give up in order to see yourself as he sees you?

### Transition

Application #2. [Slide #6]

## 2. Adoption means we have the Holy Spirit and a heavenly Father

- Jesus the Son sacrificed his life on the cross so that God the Father might adopt you as his son. And the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of his Son, took up residence in your heart when you became a Christian. In **Romans 8:15** Paul literally calls the Holy Spirit the *Spirit of adoption*. In **Galatians 4** he says it is through the Holy Spirit at work within a person that they can even call upon God as Father.
- Listen to **Galatians 4:6-7**. *6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*
- It is the Spirit at work within the Christian believer who calls out to God, “Father.” I want you to think about the Holy Spirit maybe in a way you have never understood him before. Part of the Spirit's role in your life as an adopted son of God is to maintain the father-son relationship God has with you.
- When you don't feel like a son or when you feel estranged from God there are only two possible options. **Option A**) you're not really a Christian and you can't call upon God as Father because you don't have the Holy Spirit living within you. Or **option B**) You are entangled and enmeshed in sin and have become resistant to the Spirit's work in your life so that you no longer feel close to God; you've become estranged.
- Part of the Spirit's role in the Christians' life is to maintain the intimacy, the closeness of the father-son relationship. If you long for an intimacy with God that you used to have, if you don't feel close to Him like you once did, if you feel estranged from God it's because the Spirit does not have the freedom to work in your life the way he should.

- The great thing is that intimacy with God is instantly restored through prayer and confession of sin. God is not like our human fathers who flip out when they learn of our wrongdoing. He *does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities*.<sup>8</sup> Like the father of the prodigal God welcomes us with open arms if we would just humble ourselves, confess our sin and return to him.

### Transition

Application #3. [Slide #7]

#### 3. Adoption makes us partakers together in one family

- The major implication of adoption is that through Christ you and I become part of something, part of a family. Paul says in **Ephesians 3:14**, *For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.*
- The problem with thinking of church as family is that most of us already have all the family we can handle; why would we want more of it? Why would we want more **Al Bundy, Married with Children** kind of family that's dysfunctional, verbally abusive, the make you sick in the pit of your stomach kind of family? Obviously, church as family is supposed to be different.
- The doctrine of adoption helps us rediscover the mutual affection we are to have toward each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. We are all adopted sons; there are no black sheep in this family. There are no second class citizens. We must speak to and treat each other differently, better than we do, with grace and affection and dignity and respect. Because our brother or sister in Christ is a fellow heir, a royal son. How we treat other says everything about how well we personally understand our own salvation.

### Transition

Application #4. [Slide #8]

#### 4. Adoption means the expectation of fatherly care

- If God is your father he will take care of you. That's what fathers are supposed to do, right? Remember **Matthew 6** from last week? *So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

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<sup>8</sup> Psalm 103:10

- Through adoption we now have a heavenly father who's committed to our care. It's His job to put food on the table and clothes on your back. He will take care of you so that you can spend your energy seeking his kingdom business. If you're like "but I have to work. They scheduled me. I don't have time to seek his kingdom. If I have to put my job first I'll lose it if I don't."
- If that's how you feel, then you've forgotten what Fathers are supposed to do and you've chosen the life of a street orphan instead of a life as a son. *For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.* The doctrine of adoption frees us from the tyranny of trying to provide for ourselves. *Our God will meet all our needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*<sup>9</sup> Do you trust him?

### Transition

Application #5. [Slide #9]

#### 5. One of the privileges of adoption is fatherly discipline

- Most of us don't think of discipline as a privilege. God says otherwise. **Hebrews 12:5-8**. "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." <sup>7</sup> *Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? <sup>8</sup> If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.*
- God's fatherly discipline is unlike what many of us experienced from our earthly fathers. He doesn't beat the tar out of us when we go astray. God's discipline is always perfectly tempered by his unending, unfailing love for us. His discipline is never without purpose, willy-nilly, capricious. It's always in our best interest. And it's a sign of your legitimacy as his son. I'd be very concerned if in your wanderings from God you felt no correction, no discipline, no chastisement from him.

### Transition

Finally, application #6. [Slide #10]

#### 6. Our adoption through Christ means that we should care about the adoption of orphans

- Did you ever wonder why the kind of religion God cares about is to care for orphans and widows in their distress?<sup>10</sup> It's because we were once orphaned ourselves, spiritual orphans.

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<sup>9</sup> Philippians 4:19

<sup>10</sup> James 1:27

- Our story is the story of being brought into a new family, with a new father, to gain a new hope. Our identity and inheritance are grounded in our adoption. And there is no better way to live out this aspect of our salvation than to care for and do something about orphaned children.
- In preparing for this message this week I actually had to stop and go to Miriam and express this exact sentiment to her. I said to her, “I think we need to begin praying about adopting a child.” Our salvation as adopted sons and orphan care are tied that closely together. Obviously, not every Christian believer is called to adopt. But every single one of us is called to care for orphans.

### Conclusion

- So where are you at today? Are you in the family or out? Adopted by God through Christ? Or wandering through life alone, fatherless? If you're his, you'll know it. *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*<sup>11</sup> And if not, then listen to this story told by [Lee Strobel](#).
- “Shortly after the Korean War, a Korean woman had an affair with an American soldier, and she got pregnant. He went back to the United States, and she never saw him again. She gave birth to a little girl, and this little girl looked different than the other Korean children. She had light-colored, curly hair. In that culture, children of mixed race were ostracized by the community. In fact, many women would kill their children because they didn't want them to face such rejection.
- But this woman didn't do that. She tried to raise her little girl as best she could. For seven years she tried to do that, until the rejection was too much. She did something that probably nobody in this room could imagine ever doing. She abandoned her little girl to the streets.
- This little girl was ruthlessly taunted by people. They called her the ugliest word in the Korean language, *tookki*, alien devil. It didn't take long for this little girl to draw conclusions about herself based on the way people treated her.
- For two years she lived in the streets, until finally she made her way to an orphanage. One day, word came that a couple from America was going to adopt a little boy. All the children in the orphanage got excited, because at least one little boy was going to have hope. He was going to have a family. So this little girl spent the day cleaning up the little boys—giving them baths and combing their hair—and wondering which one would be adopted by the American couple.

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 8:16

- The next day the couple came, and this is what the girl recalled (in her own words): "It was like Goliath had come back to life. I saw the man with his huge hands lift up each and every baby. I knew he loved every one of them as if they were his own. I saw tears running down his face, and I knew if they could, they would have taken the whole lot home with them.
- "He saw me out of the corner of his eye. Now let me tell you. I was nine years old, but I didn't even weigh 30 pounds. I was a scrawny thing. I had worms in my body. I had lice in my hair. I had boils all over me. I was full of scars. I was not a pretty sight. But the man came over to me, and he began rattling away something in English, and I looked up at him. Then he took this huge hand and laid it on my face. What was he saying? He was saying, 'I want this child. This is the child for me.'"<sup>12</sup>
- What a wonderful picture of what God does for us. He knows you're a mess. He knows there are others who are more deserving. And yet he says this to you. "I want this child. This is the child for me." And all he asks is that you say yes. *In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- 6 to the praise of his glorious grace.*

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<sup>12</sup> Lee Strobel, "Meet the Jesus I Know," Preaching Today Audio #211