

The Blessing of Adoption

This evening I want to look at the subject of adoption as taught in the Bible. You have probably heard the complaint leveled against pro-life people by pro-abortion people that abortion is the way to go because pro-life people are not compassionate enough to adopt unwanted children. Of course, that is not true. Even in this church we know people who have adopted children, and who are giving these children a great future – giving them love and affection, and an opportunity to live a proper life.

Now, in the Jewish culture of the Old Testament, people did not practice adoption. Why? Because they had other ways of dealing with this problem. One way was called levirate marriage. This meant a brother was to marry his brother's widow and raise children for his brother. Another alternative was polygamy. In 1 Samuel Elkanah's first wife, Hannah, was "without child" – that is, not able to bear children – and so Elkanah married another wife in order to have children. The third alternative used sometimes was easy divorce. So levirate marriage, polygamy and easy divorce solved the problem of adoption in the Old Testament Jewish culture.

In the Roman and Greek cultures adoption was widely practiced. Normally it meant the adoption of young males, not females. The adoptee, usually a young male, was taken out of his previous state and installed, or placed, in a new relationship with his new father. In a Roman household the father was the leader, the person of great power, who could even kill members of his own family, although this was not often practiced. So, the Greek word for adoption is *huiiothesia* – *huios* means son and *thesia* means placement. It means installation of a person as a son. All his old debts were canceled, and the adopted child started a new life with privilege and responsibilities under the rule of the new father.

Adoption today as well as then is a legal act. The adopted child is granted full rights and privileges of sonship in a family in which he had no rights of his own previously. Essentially, then, adoption is the bestowal of a new relationship.

Of course, we know that no one adopts unless their action is based on love. The father loves this boy and it is understood that this boy will secure a new set of relationships. This is true even in modern times. The adopting parents see to it that the child severs all previous relationships so that his natural father and mother will not claim anything later.

We are interested in this doctrine as it is taught in the Bible because of our spiritual adoption into God's family. We have spoken before about obedience leading to salvation and justification. All these steps of salvation must precede adoption, even though we understand all these things take place simultaneously. But logically you must first be regenerated. You must repent and be baptized into the Lord Jesus Christ. These preconditions precede adoption into the family of God.

Paul in Ephesians 1:5 said, ***“he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,”***. Paul is speaking about election of us by God from eternity. God's destiny of us is for this specific blessing, that we be adopted as sons of God.

Salvation is our relationship to God as Creator through the blood of Jesus His Son. He gives us a new life in Christ. But adoption relates us to God as our heavenly Father. Adoption places us in the family of God.

Let's look at some scriptures to see how God relates us to himself as our Father. John 1:12-13 says, ***“¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God”***.

Right is the Greek “exousia”, authority – ***“to become the children of God”*** – children **NOT** born of natural descent nor of human decision nor a husband's will but born of God. So, notice in that scripture, first we see regeneration. Verse 13 speaks about regeneration, which is a precondition for the blessing of adoption. So that is why this is the highest blessing imaginable for a Christian. There is a bestowal, a giving of authority, a giving of right to this child who is adopted by God the Father into God's family. He gave the right.

There is bestowing of exousia – authority – right, so that you can come to the presence of God without fear and without shame, without embarrassment. You know that you have the right to come into his presence because God has given you the right to come. And then – **this is what adoption is all about** – you are a child of God.

John also talks about this in 1 John 3:1 *“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so, we are.”* – here he is speaking about adoption. The one who adopts us is specifically God the Father and He does this from His love. “And that is what we are.” In other words, this adoption is a blessing that we as believers experience even now, right now. *“and so we are.”* In other words, we who are believers are his adopted sons.

In John 8, Jesus spoke about the unbelieving Jews as children, but not children of God, but children of the devil. That was our relationship also. We were children of the devil. But we were washed in the blood of Jesus and we are then we are installed legally as sons in the family of God, entitled to all privileges and status and dignity. That is our present position.

However, as adopted children we won’t enjoy the fullness of the blessings of adoption until we are glorified. That happens when we receive the resurrection body and when all sin is removed from us. Then we can come and see God, our heavenly Father, face to face. That is what John says in 1 John 3:2. *“Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.”* This is the highest possible blessing any human being can experience - the blessing of fellowship with God face to face – to be embraced by God, loved by God. We will see him face to face.

Paul refers to this in Romans 8:19: *“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.”* – notice, they are sons by adoption – “to be revealed.” The revelation of the sons of God is something that we are still waiting for. That revelation will be a revelation of the sons of God without sin in all glory.

So, Paul speaks again in Romans 8:23. He makes this statement: ***“And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”*** – what? “wait eagerly for our adoption as sons” – that is, the future installment of our adoption, which is what? “the redemption of our bodies.” That is the resurrection of our bodies. When that happens, sin will totally be done away with.

Look at Romans 8:29 ***“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.”*** When God reveals the sons of God, they will be made conformable to the image of Jesus Christ our older brother. It is at that time we will see God as he is. At that time, we will enjoy the fullness of the blessing that is ours as adopted sons.

So, we understood that God the Father is the agent of this activity, but the Holy Spirit also has something to do in this act of adoption. What does the Holy Spirit do? Paul speaks of this in Eph. 1:11-14 ***“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”***

The Holy Spirit is given to us adopted sons as a pledge of what is to come. As the HS dwells within us He grows within us as we allow the word of God to grow within us. Over a lifetime of service, we get to a point that we have a deep affection and attachment and therefore a confidence in God. The Holy Spirit does not force anything upon us, He grants us a closeness to God in a way that we may never be able to achieve on our own. The Holy Spirit guides and directs us in this life and can convict us as well. The Holy Spirit can pray for us when we arrive at a place where we simply have no words to use to go to God for needs and hurts in this life. Paul speaks of this in Romans 8.

Romans 8:14-17 *¹⁴For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵For 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!” ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

Now this is proof that you are a child of God. Is there a Spirit-produced cry to God the Father? The Holy Spirit is the one who produces that kind of inner state of confidence and affection. It is not just theoretical. It is not just believing a certain way, and therefore you are a Christian. That itself is one way of proofs that we are children of God, but this is the highest form of proof that we can have. It is not just a theoretical and intellectual deduction, but it is based on this subjective reality created within us by the third Person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit.

As we consider what God has done for us through this adoption process, we should rejoice having been made sons and daughters of God, entitled to all the blessings that accrue to us based on this legal placement and installation in the family of God. May we rejoice as we more fully understand this glorious reality of our adoption!