Adoption

Today's study is on the doctrine of Adoption. Sinclair Ferguson writes of adoption as, *"the highest privilege of all—is adoption into the family of God with all the rights and privileges of knowing Him as our heavenly Father."* Outside of Christ, we're strangers to the family of God, but having been united to Christ through faith alone and justified, *we "obtain access into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:2).* In Christ we have been adopted into the family of God, *"and 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"* (Romans 8:17 ESV). As Christ suffered, we will also suffer via our Union with him. Yet we have been set free from our old family of the World and Satan and adopted into the family of God.

To comfort you in this high privilege of Adoption, God gives us narratives in the bible of His redemptive grace. In 2 Samuel 9, we read of Jonathan's crippled son Mephibosheth:

And the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him?" Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in his feet." 4 The king said to him, "Where is he?" And Ziba said to the king, "He is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar." 5 Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, at Lo-debar. 6 And Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage. And David said, "Mephibosheth!" And he answered, "Behold, I am your servant." 7 And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always." 8 And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?"

9 Then the king called Ziba, Saul's servant, and said to him, "All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. 10 And you and your sons and your servants shall till the land for him and shall bring in the produce, that your master's grandson may have bread to eat. But Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall always eat at my table." Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. 11 Then Ziba said to the king, "According to all that my lord the king commands his servant, so will your servant do." So Mephibosheth ate at David's[o] table, like one of the king's sons."

King Saul was chosen by the people, but God chose David to be king of Israel. As Jesus suffered, so too David was rejected and suffered. Rather than siding with his father, Saul, Jonathan makes a covenant with David,

> *"After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. 2 From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. 3 And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself 1 Sam 18:1-3).*
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> Jonathan then expands on his covenant with David in 1 Samuel 20, that David would swear that he would not *cut off* his family but rather show his *steadfast love*. What a picture we have here of God's enduring love for Israel. His promise that He would never leave them or forsake them. This was not because of their inherent righteousness, but because of the Father's covenant within the Godhead, with the Son.
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> In many ways, the story of Mephibosheth is our story. Someone else had to take the initiative to show us kindness and love–to restore us. This is what God did for us in his Son. However, unlike Mephibosheth, who was crippled in both feet, we were dead in our trespasses and sin. Probably one of the most important verses in the Bible is Ephesians 2:1-7, *"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins . . . But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is*

by grace you have been saved. [6] And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, [7] in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus"

The Goal of Redemption

Galatians 4:1-7, "What I am saying is that as long as an heir is underage, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. [2] The heir is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. [3] So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces[a] of the world. [4] But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, [5] to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.[b] [6] Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba,[c] Father." [7] So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir."

The goal of redemption is not just that our sins are forgiven, adoption is more than that, in justification the judge declares that our sins our forgiven and we're declared not guilty. Adoption is when the judge says come live in my house, where Jesus is your elder brother. Early in redemptive history, the children of God are referred to as the *sons of God (Gen 6:2),* The Lord commanded Pharaoh to be told concerning Israel, *"He is my son, even my firstborn."— Exod. 4: 22.* This is one of the reasons why the church is called the *family of God (1 Thess 4:10).* There is a great movement today that sees church membership as not necessary. This is impossible for a Christian because *God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spriit that calls out "Abba Father." The word "Abba"* is from the Aramaic for Father or Papa. The apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:29-30 ESV:

"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. [30] And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

Paul is writing here that the goal of our predestination is that we "*be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers,"* and then he connects it to our justification and glorification. "*That he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil 1:6).* You see, all the doctrines of grace are connected because they are rooted in the vine or Jesus Christ (John 15:1-10). You will hear some people say that they're a 4-point Calvinist, that they believe in only 4 of 5 doctrines of Grace. This is a denial of grace, because they are all of grace in Jesus Christ. Once I understood the doctrine of total depravity, I had no problems with the others. Paul writes in Romans 5:8, *"but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."* This is the main point of Reformed theology, that God saves sinners, not that God saves those who help themselves.

John Owen writes in His book on *Communion with God* of how we enjoy this communion as adopted children.

1. **Liberty:** first, we enjoy our liberty as the children of God. We're set free from our bondage to the old family in Adam and are now united to Christ and adopted into the family of God. We're not entirely free from the influence of the *Old man,* but Paul writes that we're to consider the old man as dead, as crucified with Christ and we're no longer *enslaved to sin.* I like how R.C. Sproul explains that it's like a chicken with it's head cut off, the mortal blow has been struck, but the chicken continues to run around making a mess of things. "*Christ redeemed us from the **curse** of the law by becoming a curse for us"* (Gal 3:13). Though we still sin, we're no longer a slave to sin.

John Gerstner tells the story of a child, who draws a picture and brings it to His father. The father looks at the drawing of stick figures an awful looking picture. However, the father cherishes it and hangs it on the wall for everyone to admire the work of his child. This is the way God receives our pitiful works of obedience. In Roman Catholic theology, there is a term they use called to *supererogate,* which is to go above the works of Christ. The definition from Merriam-Webster is, *"to perform beyond the call of duty." That Latin word, in turn, derives from the prefix super-, meaning "over and above,"* However, Jesus tells his disciples that they if they have done all that is required, they would still be *unprofitable servants* because they do not gain any merit or bonus points for their service (Luke 17:5-10). The gospel is trusting and resting in the works of Christ alone for your justification before God. You no longer have to *merit* His favor, since you're His adopted child in Jesus Christ.

2. **Title:** we have a new title as the *sons of God* with the privileges of the family of God; being a member of the body of Christ and serving others for the sake of His glory. We can now enjoy the whole world as God's world which is under His providence and for our pleasure. Paul writes in Romans 8:22-23 ESV;

   For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. 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.

   William Hendrickson writes*, "Even now believers have been adopted as God's sons (Rom 8:15, 16). But, in another sense, they are still waiting for their adoption. They are waiting for the public display of their standing as children of God. As of right now their bodies are still subject to death. But one day their souls will have been completely delivered from sin, and their bodies will have become transformed, so that they will resemble the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. To that great day they now look forward in hope (Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:50–55; 2 Cor. 5:2, 3; Phil. 3:21; 1 John 3:2)."*

3. **Access to the Father:** We're trinitarians, so when we say that we have access to the Father as His children, we have this access on account of the Son and with the help of the Holy Spirit. In Christ, we receive his righteousness and are joint heirs with Him, so we can cry our "*Abba Father."*

4. **We experience the discipline of God:** we experience affliction in this world, but for the child of God, affliction is always chastisement as the Father *disciplines those He loves*. Owen rightly points this out in Hebrews 12:5-11 as one of the differences between Christians and unbelievers. Christians see purpose in their suffering since the Scriptures teach them that trials have a goal, *"but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. [11] For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it"* Not all suffering is discipline, we see this in the case of Job, but this is something that we need to consider.

The Fear of God

Throughout the bible**,** we're told of the fear of God. There is an important distinction that we need to understand from the Scriptures concerning the *"fear of God."* Martin Luther struggled with this distinction which has become his distinction between what he called a *servile* fear and a *filial* fear*.* Luther called the Christians fear as *filial* fear, drawing from the Latin from which we get the idea of family.

Servile fear is a type of fear related to divine justice. Servile fear is like the fear a servant has for a malicious master. It inclines a person to reject sin out of fear of punishment, whether temporal or eternal. It is different from **filial fear,** which is a reverent fear of God based on love and trust.

I remember, as a child reading my King James Bible, after my father had passed away. The first verse that God spoke to me was Proverbs 9:10 KJV, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."* Every Christian should see the video series from Ligonier Ministries on the Holiness of God. In these videos, God used R.C. Sproul to bring an awareness of the Holiness of God. I want to end with a quote from R.C. Sproul's book, *The Holiness of God*, he writes:

"How we understand the person and character of God the Father affects every aspect of our lives. It affects far more than what we normally call the "religious" aspects of our lives. If God is the Creator of the entire universe, then it must follow that He is the Lord of the whole universe. No part of the world is outside of His lordship. That means that no part of my life must be outside of His lordship. His holy character has something to say about economics, politics, athletics, romance—everything with which we are involved."

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