

# Adoption

L.R. Shelton, Jr.

NOT ONLY HAS GOD THE FATHER CHOSEN US in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him (v4), but He has in love predestinated us unto the *adoption* of children by Jesus Christ to Himself.

This adoption is another blessing or privilege that God has given us in Christ Jesus which flows out of His saving work for us and our union with Him through grace by faith. This great blessing or privilege is according to the good pleasure of His will, and to the praise of the glory of His grace (v6).

## SCRIPTURES PERTAINING TO THIS GREAT ACT:

Galatians 4:4-7: "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

Romans 8:14-17: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

1 John 3:1-2: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

John 1:12-13: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The Scriptures teach that regeneration gives us the nature of children—His children (2 Peter 1:4); adoption gives us the rights of children, to call God our Father, "Abba, Father," my Father. We then are partakers of both of these, for we are sons by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When faith realizes the cleansing power of the blood of the Lord Jesus, and lays hold upon the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, then the justified man becomes a son and a child. Justification and adoption always go together. "Whom he called, them he also justified," and the calling is a call to the Father's house, and to a recognition of sonship. Believing brings forgiveness and justification through our Lord Jesus; it also brings adoption, for it is written, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." This is not a privilege granted to assurance or growth in grace: but is a blessing which belongs to him who has the smallest degree of faith: a blessing that belongs to every one of God's elect, whether they have just been born again, or have been in grace for years. "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26).

## WHAT IS ADOPTION?

It is taking a stranger into the relationship of a son and heir; as Moses was the adopted son of King Pharaoh's daughter, so we who were strangers and aliens (Eph 2:12) has God taken and made sons and heirs with Christ Jesus. In adoption God does three things:

(1) He gives us His name. He who is adopted bears the name of Him who adopts Him—"I will write upon him the name of my God" (Rev 3:12).

(2) He sanctifies us by His Spirit. When He adopts, He anoints; when He makes sons, He makes saints. When a man adopts another for his son and heir, he may put his name upon him, but he cannot put his disposition into him; if he be of a sullen, gloomy, sulky nature, he cannot alter it; but whom God adopts He sanctifies. He not only gives a new name, but a new nature. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). He infuses into us His Spirit of holiness. He turns the wolf

into a lamb; He makes the heart humble and gracious; He works such a change as if another soul dwelt in the same body (2 Cor 5:17).

(3) Where the Holy Spirit enters, there is a cry: "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal 4:6). It is the Spirit of God that cries. Romans 8:15 tells us that it is our cry, but a cry prompted and inspired by the Holy Spirit because He is the Spirit of adoption.

He anoints us in some manner so that we are able to pray aright. He puts His divine energy into us so that we cry, Abba, Father, in an acceptable manner. There are times when we cannot cry at all, and then He cries in us. There are seasons when doubts and fears abound, and so suffocate us with their fumes that we cannot even raise a cry, and then the indwelling Spirit represents us, crying in our name, and making intercession for us according to the will of God (Rom 8:26,27). Thus does the cry, "Abba, Father," rise up in our hearts even when we feel as if we could not pray, and dare not think ourselves children. Then we may each say: "I live, yet not I, but the Spirit of Christ that dwelleth in me." On the other hand, at times our soul gives such a sweet assent to the Spirit's cry that it becomes ours also, but then we more than ever own the work of the Spirit, and still ascribe to Him the blessed cry, "Abba, Father."

It is literally the cry of the Son. God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, and that Spirit cries in us exactly according to the cry of the Son. In Mark 14:36 we see in our Lord's agony He cried in His native tongue, Hebrew, "Abba, Father." Is not this a lesson for us?

*Adoption comes to us by redemption:* We should prize redemption, because it was by the precious blood of Christ that we were redeemed from the curse of the law. "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal 4:4,5).

By adoption we are *no more like to bondservants*: "Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father" (Gal 4:1-2).

By adoption *we are heirs*: "Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Gal 4:7). No man living has ever realized to the full what this means. Believers are at this moment heirs, but what is the estate? It is God Himself! We are heirs of God (Rom 8:17)! Not only of the promises, of the covenant engagements, and of all the blessings which belong to the chosen seed, but heirs of God Himself? The Lord is my portion, saith my soul. This God is my God for ever and ever. Surely "the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage" (Psa 16:6).

**LET'S LOOK AT THE WONDER OF GOD'S LOVE IN ADOPTING US INTO HIS FAMILY:**

Meditate upon this truth: that God should adopt us when He had a Son of His own. Men adopt because they want children, and desire to have some one to bear their name; but that God should adopt us when He had a Son of His own, the Lord Jesus, is a wonder of love. Now since God had a Son of His own, and such a Son, how wonderful God's love in adopting us. We needed a Father, but He did not need sons.

Contemplate what we were before God adopted us. We were very deformed, in a state of sin and misery, very unlovely, and surely a man will not adopt one for his heir that is crooked and ill-favored, but rather he that has some beauty. But when we were yet in our blood, God adopted us. "When I saw thee polluted in thy blood, it was the time of love" (Eze 16:6). God did not adopt us when we were adorned with holiness and had the angels' glory upon us; but when we were as filthy as hell itself, diseased as lepers; that was the time of His love. Praise the Lord!

Ponder with love and admiration that God should go to such great expense in adopting us. When men adopt, they have only some papers to sign, and the thing is effected; but when God planned to adopt, it cost Him a far greater expense. It was no easy thing to make heirs of wrath, heirs of the promise. There was nothing simple and easy about God devising the adoption of fallen man. Our adoption was purchased at the price of the blood of His own Son. Here is the wonder of God's love in adopting us, that He should go to such expense to accomplish it.

Think upon this precious truth that God should adopt *His enemies*. If a man adopts another for his heir, he will not adopt his enemy; but that God should adopt us when we were not only strangers, but enemies, is the wonder of His love. For God to have pardoned His enemies was a great act of love; but to adopt them for His heirs sets the angels in Heaven to wondering, and also this poor soul of mine.

Again consider that God should take great numbers out of the devil's family and adopt them into the family of Heaven. Men adopt usually but one heir, but God is resolved to increase His family. He brings many sons to glory. God's adopting millions is the wonder of love. Had but one been adopted, all of us might have despaired, but He brings many sons to glory, which opens a door of hope to us.

Once more meditate upon this truth that God should confer so great honor upon us in adopting us when we should be cast out of His presence in hell forever! "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom 8:19).

Let me sum it up: *Adoption* is that act of God whereby I, who was by nature a child of wrath even as others, am, entirely of the pure grace of God, translated out of the evil family of Satan, and brought actually and virtually into the family of God, so that I take His name, share the privileges of sons, and am to all intents and purposes the actual offspring and child of God.

I close by saying I am utterly amazed at the great love and grace of my heavenly Father to adopt me into His family as a child, when I deserve nothing but His wrath. I can only praise Him and give Him glory for it is all of grace. What a blessing; what a privilege to be a child of the heavenly Father and an heir of God Himself and a joint heir with Christ, all because of my blessed Lord's redemptive work for me.

Did you ever think what a high honor it is to be called a son of God? Do we who profess to be children of God walk worthy of this great privilege?