

Our Adoption As God's Children

Ephesians 1:3-6 [New King James] *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”*

Paul examines our salvation in Jesus Christ as one might scrutinise a masterful cut diamond.

First Paul pauses to appreciate the grandeur of the whole gem, then he re-focuses to examine the masterwork of the gem's individual facets.

For Paul, the grand organising principle of salvation is our union with Jesus Christ. More precisely, it is the divine life that flows from that union.

Ephesians 2:4-5 [New King James] *“But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),”*

Paul is very careful never to lose sight of this integrated whole of our salvation, of which adoption is but one facet.

Defining adoption

Adoption is an act of the Creator God whereby He makes us members of His created family.

This involves two processes.

1 The process of actually becoming a created child of God –

John 1:12-13 [New King James] *“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”*

Receiving the right to become a child of God through faith in what God has done for us through His Son Jesus Christ.

This is the being born again from above, [John 3:3-8] the receiving in our lives of the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

1 John 3:1-2 [New King James] *“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”*

This process is only in part, a guarantee of what we will receive in full at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, [**Ephesians 1:13-14**].

2 The process of receiving the inheritance from God –

Colossians 3:23-24 [New King James] *“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.”*

This inheritance will include a spirit body that is freed from the limitations of our physical human body, [1 Corinthians 15:50-58] and the gift of eternal life, [Romans 6:23].

The Greek word translated “*adoption*” is “*huiiothesia*” from “*huios*” meaning son and “*tithemi*” meaning to place, the literal meaning then is to place a son.

Paul uses the word adoption [*huiiothesias*] five times in his letters.

Romans 8:15 [New King James] *“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’”*

The Holy Spirit works through our human spirit, [Job 32:8] to confirm we are no longer slaves to sin, but adopted children of the Creator God.

Romans 8:23 [New King James] *“Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”*

We long for the time when the process of our adoption will be complete.

Romans 9:4 [New King James] *“who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;”*

The Jews viewed God’s choosing Israel in the Old Testament as being like adoption.

Galatians 4:4-5 [New King James] *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ was perfect, for although He was human He never sinned, so His death paid the penalty of all human sin, because being God His life was far greater in value than all He had created and sustained, including all human beings.

Ephesians 1:3-5 [New King James] *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,”*

Our salvation, which includes adoption, is all because the loving Godhead desires that we become objects of His unconditional love. Nothing we could do will earn this adoption, it will only happen because it is what the Creator God desires.

How would Roman Christians have understood Paul’s “*adoption*” metaphor?

Adoption was not a Hebrew or Jewish practice.

The very few examples of adoption in the Old Testament come from outside the Israelite culture.

Eliezer – **Genesis 15:1-4.**

Moses – **Exodus 2:10.**

Genubeth – **1 Kings 11:20.**

Esther – **Esther 2:7, 15.**

Paul used a customary and meaningful practice in Roman society to expound one of the great benefits of our salvation in Jesus Christ.

Lessons learnt from Roman adoption requirements

God the Father paid for our family membership –

It was an indispensable requirement of Roman law on adoption for the person being adopted to be bought or redeemed from natural parents. Only then did the magistrates assign the adopted person to the new father.

The Roman Christians would have recognised the Christians are justified freely by God's grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ, [**Romans 3:24**] to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive adoption as sons, [**Galatians 1:1-7**].

Family membership is permanent –

Adoption into a Roman family means total subjection to a new father, which would last as long as the father lived.

The Christian application is since God is eternal, the Roman Christians would have understood that their place in God's household is forever!

Family members receive father's love and blessings –

Initially, adoption helped to maintain the Roman family's name. It was later used as a means of qualifying for certain state benefits, and even for satisfying personal needs and feelings for affection.

The Christian application is that there is the obvious spiritual parallel, as we join God's created family, we have access to His blessings, and accept His love.

All family members belong to father –

Under Roman law, the person being adopted had to transfer his property and future acquisitions to the new parents.

This was confirmed to apply to Christians in Paul's words.

Romans 1:6 [NIV] *“And you also are among those who **are called to belong to Jesus Christ.**”*

We are called to be Christians who belong to Jesus Christ having been purchased by His sacrificial blood, [**Acts 20:28**].

Romans 14:7-8 [New King James] *“For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's.”*

Knowing and accepting this fact is the **only** way we can worship God with an acceptable attitude of mind.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

This is how we apply the wishes of Jesus Christ and the Father, [John 4:23] for us to worship God in “spirit and truth.”

Family members start over with a clean slate –

The Roman adoptive parents, in turn, had to assume all of their new son's debts, freeing him from past burdens.

For the Roman Christians, this would emphasise the removal of the penalty of their past sins.

Through the faithful acceptance of Jesus Christ's sacrifice being a substitute for our own deserved death, the believer's spiritual state is left perfectly clean so that they can embark on a new life without the burden of the past.

Adopted sons and daughters are considered real not step-children of God –

The end result of the Roman adoption process was so final, and the change so real, that the adopted individual was treated as if they had been a natural born child of their new parents.

Roman Christians would recognise that they were now members of God's household, veritable sons and genuine heirs of God, with full membership in no way different to which is conferred at birth in a human family.

Family members take on their father's name –

In Roman society, the adopted person, irrespective of age and rank, took on the name of their new father. No authority could minimise or ever ignore this change.

This would have affirmed each Roman Christian as being a new creation, a new being, a full spiritual heir of their new father and call him by that name.

Romans 8:14-17 [New King James] *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”*

What a privilege! Because we are God's adopted children, we share in the great treasures as co-heirs with Jesus Christ.

God has already given us wonderful and precious gifts, the sacrifice of His Son Jesus Christ for our forgiveness of past sins and a promise of eternal life. God also encourages us to ask Him for all our needs in this present life, [Matthew 7:7-11].

The blessings of adoption

To help us study the blessings of adoption and to prayerfully thank God for them, I am now going to list them along with the scriptures that confirm them.

As adopted children we have a family name –

Ephesians 3:14-15; 1 John 3:1; Revelation 3:12

As adopted children we are putting on a new family likeness –

Colossians 3:9-11; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18

As adopted children we are taking on our parents' spiritual nature –

2 Peter 1:4; John 1:12-13; John 3:6

As adopted children we have affection of other family members –

1 John 2:9-11; 1 John 3:14-18; 1 John 4:7-8; 1 John 5:1

As adopted children we are subjects of the father's care –

Matthew 6:32-34

As adopted children we are subject to parental discipline –

1 Peter 1:3-5; Romans 8:17

As adopted children we have indwelling Holy Spirit –

Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:11-14; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22

As adopted children we have a guarantee of our inheritance –

Romans 8:23; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Colossians 1:27

As adopted children we are conforming to image of Jesus Christ –

Romans 8:29; Hebrews 12:10-11

As adopted children, our relationship with God will be revealed at Jesus Christ's Second Coming –

Romans 8:18-30 [New King James] *“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”*

Pray that this day may soon dawn.