

Romans 8:15 “Adoption.” Steve Harden 11/8/20

It is good to see you all this evening! I'm glad you're here. Kids between 0 and 4 we have a special time for you! Miss Julie is in the back and she would love to have someone to play with. So, if you are 0, 1, 2 or 3 we would invite you, if your parents say it's okay, to go play with Miss Julie there in the back. This is kind of new for us in this weird time we've been through and so we're beginning to open up our childcare again, so we rejoice in that! It's been hard to share and declare our love for children when we couldn't be around them, but this is wonderful. I would encourage you too that if you see Julie, thank her for the work that she is doing and the phone calls and everything to try to get this all set up for your children. Thank you all too for giving your testimonies, telling your stories about children. We love you and we thank you for what you are doing and what we can do in the days ahead as well.

You know, in the last couple of weeks we've been talking about our unity with Christ and how we find our identity in Him. Oh! Before I get started, let me say that I was not supposed to be here to preach for you today. Shane, we kind of go every other week, but he's got some sickness in his family and because of all the craziness going on we just thought it best for him to stay home this week. So, that's why I'm here, I wanted to tell you. Shane's fine, his family will be okay, it's not covid or anything but just to be safe, we try to do that.

Alright, over the last few weeks we've been talking about unity with Christ and how our identity is found in Him. Unity with Christ simply means what is true about Christ is true about me and true about you if you are indeed a follower of Jesus. So, when He died on the cross that day and paid the penalty that your sin and my sin demanded, because of our unity with Him, we died with Him. It was as if we died on the cross. That's what our sin imputed to Jesus means. It's as if I died on the cross and that penalty was paid as if I paid it. In like manner, when He rose again from the dead, I rose with Him. His resurrection guarantees that I too, after I die, will rise again from the dead and spend eternity with Him in glory. That's what unity with Christ means when we say that. It's as if I had died or I had resurrected from the dead.

So, tonight though, we're going to step away from Colossians for just a week to address another truth about our unity with Christ in light of our focus on children today. I wanted to bring this very special message to you about adoption. We know that Jesus is God's own son. We know that. He is the only begotten Son of the Father, but the truth is that Jesus is not God's only child. No, the Scripture says that God adopts those who come to faith in Christ, those who trust in Him for their salvation! We are now the adopted children of the most high God with our older brother, Jesus Christ. And so, we are united with Him in accepting our Father as our Father. Romans 8 and verse 15 speaks very clearly to this. Paul writes: “For 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!” So, tonight, I just wanted to quickly define and describe the spirit of adoption as described here in Romans 8.

So, the spirit of adoption defined. When Paul wrote this some 2,000 years ago, he wrote the book in a Roman culture. We can assume then that he had a Roman adoption on his mind when he wrote to the church, where? In Rome! Right? That's a simple assumption. So, let's look at what Roman adoption was like back in Paul's day. Roman adoption occurred primarily for a person to have an heir, to give a man an heir to his estate. If a man didn't have a natural son, or if he just didn't think his natural son was worthy of inheriting his estate, he would go out and find him one and adopt a young man. Now that man might be an adult, or a child, but he would adopt him and bring him into his family so that he could leave his estate to someone that he trusted,

and he would search for this man, he would find him, and he would purchase him not unlike someone would purchase a slave in that day. The transaction very much resembled the transaction of the purchase of a slave, but when the boy was officially adopted, he became a son of that man in every way as legitimate as his natural born son. In fact, in some ways, the adopted son would have more honor than the natural son because the father had chosen him, chosen him to be his son. There were tremendous benefits to being an adopted son in that day. You see, his life before his adoption was forgotten as if it hadn't occurred. If he had any debts, they were all canceled. If he was guilty of any wrongdoing, his account was wiped clean with the adoption. He indeed was starting over; you might say that he was born again. The adopted lad would then get a full share in the estate of the father. If there were more children, in Jewish law, if you remember, the oldest son got a double portion which was important in stories of the Old Testament, but that's not Roman law. In Roman law, everyone got the same, all the sons got the same. So you see, to be adopted was a huge gift to a young man!

Now, Paul uses that analogy and brings it over to describe our relationship with God, our Father. God chooses to adopt us as His sons and daughters. He purchases us through the life of the Son. He wiped your slate clean of all past offenses and debts. They're gone. He gives you a portion of His inheritance. You have become a legal heir to the King of the universe. What Jesus Christ has by right, you now have by grace! You are a son or a daughter of the most high God. And nothing, nothing will ever change that! Nothing you do, nothing that can be done to you will ever change it. It is legal. It is a position you now enjoy. You cannot ever become unadopted in God's family! Nothing will ever take away your status as a child of God. Again, in Roman law, the adopted son was never dismissed or disinherited. Our adoption likewise is complete, never altered by any circumstance. That is your position if you are a follower of Jesus Christ. That's who you are. It's not about what you do; it's about who you are in Jesus, a son or a daughter of the King. I believe the greatest factor in growing in spiritual maturity is to ever be growing in adopting the mindset of being a child of the King. I don't think anything comes close to this in our sanctification, in our becoming more like Jesus, than this one thing: to adopt the attitude and the mindset that I am a child of royalty. I have been adopted into the family of the King, therefore, I will act like a son and I will act like a daughter. It's not about rules, my friend, it's about who you are! You are a child of God.

Now let's describe this spirit of adoption a little bit. Here in verse 15 we see that there is a lot of comparison and contrast. I trust that it's on the screen behind me. It is separated in the middle by a conjunction, a little conjunction that says "but" right? In the first part we find that we had not received and in the second part you see that we have received. Very simply, in the first half we see that we have not received the spirit of slavery and in the second half we see that we have received the spirit of adoption. In the first half we see that we have not received a spirit that leads to fear but in the second half we see we have received the spirit that is able to cry out, "Abba Father"! In the first half we did not receive the spirit of slavery, now this is where it gets interesting in following his comparison and contrast, right? What would you think would be the opposite of a spirit of slavery? Freedom! Liberty! Right? That's the first thing that comes to my mind. But not to Paul's so much! That's not what he says. He didn't compare slavery to freedom. No, rather, the spirit of slavery and the spirit of adoption! He compares and contrasts the spirit of slavery and spirit of adoption and I find that fascinating and I think I know why. Maybe the best way is for us to imagine ourselves in an unthinkable situation.

Take yourself back to a very, very dark time in our history around 1850 and let's imagine that you were a slave in that day. As was the case for many persons living in slavery all of their

lives, you had been the property of a master and if you will imagine, that master is a wicked master who has often mistreated you. To continue with our story, let's say one morning another man comes and points at you and he says, "I want to buy him, or her. I want to buy this person." You. And so, the transaction between the two men was made and you now belong to a new master. Obviously, you would not know what to expect! You would not know what was going to happen when you get to his home!

But when you get to the home, he turns to you and he says, "You are free. I set you free. You can go wherever you want. You can pursue whatever you desire to pursue. Your old master has no rights over you anymore. I have no demands of you. You can be your own master. You're free." Now that would be a pretty great gift, right? In my mind as I'm thinking about it, I'm thinking that might be the very best gift that he could give me, but not according to Paul. Imagine not that he says, 'You are free,' but suppose instead of granting you your freedom and sending you on your way, he says, 'I have purchased you so that you can become my son or that you could become my daughter. I have purchased you so that you could become my child. I love you. I have adopted you as my child. I want you to know how much I love you. I wish for you to be joint heir in my estate. I will give you everything that you will ever need. You will never be in want. You will have constant access to me, anytime, day or night. All you have to do is call and you can know that I will always, always only have our best interest on my heart. Now, I do require that you serve me, but not like before; you're not my slave. You don't serve me out of fear but simply I want you to serve me as a child who wishes to please his dad. That's what I want for you. My desire is for you to grow and to love me as much as I love you and because you love me so much, you will desire to do my will. That's what I want for you. But understand, whatever you do, it will never change your position in this family. It doesn't matter what you do. Well it matters, but it will never change your position.' Is there any question in your mind given these two circumstances which one you would choose? You are free to go or come be my child, be the recipient of my love for you and grow together in our relationship.

My friend, God didn't merely, when He saved you, grant you freedom. But He said, come be my son! Come be my daughter! I have adopted you; you have all the privileges and honor that comes with being my child. Come, call me Abba Father! Abba is an Aramaic word for daddy, or papa. That is the word that would have been most commonly used in the home around a relationship with daddy. It's the way we would use daddy, right? Intimate, loving, close. The term father is a Greek term, pateras, it was also used commonly but with more of an official or legal sense. These two words were used much like daddy and father are in the English language. When someone is speaking informally about their daddy, they use that term, right? Or at a gathering or when you're calling, "Hey daddy, what's up?" But you would never find the term daddy on a legal document. You would find father. In much the same way, Paul is sharing with us the expression of how we relate with our Father, our Abba Father. He uses the term father regarding our official standing and legal standing with God. We are legally His adopted child. It is appropriate and encouraged for us to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven." Relational intimacy with God may be expressed by the term father, but it doesn't have to be. It's not assumed. It's not a given. Not like the term Abba Father, Abba or daddy.

By using Abba, he is telling us we can have an intimate relationship with our Father. Abba assumes familiarity with God, a relationship with Him, a warm, natural relationship, a word that is fit for a little child who freely and without inhibitions runs into his daddy's arms. That's Abba. Abba. Daddy. And I think the difference here and the beauty of this comes to play

when we pray. Far too often we come solely as father and maybe not enough as abba, at least for some of us.

It's often like if you obtain audience with the king, and you have a request of the king. How would you go about doing that? Well chances are you would think about it beforehand and when you entered the presence you wouldn't run, you would walk; it would be a little more formal. It would be reverent and you would lay out your request in measured tones, phrases, something that you had prepared beforehand because you were going before the king, right? But it's so much different with Abba! It's so much different with daddy. You just run into his presence and throw yourself into His arms and you cry out to Him! There's no sense of formality! My children never felt formal with me, and I trust my grandchildren will never feel formal with me. They haven't yet! They love to come and jump into Papa's arms! That's what it means to have Abba, to cry out to Abba, you have that intimate relationship. You don't pray from a distance; you don't use a script! Sometimes, your sentences are broken and you go from over here to over there and your conversation goes from one place to another. That's what an intimate relationship, a daddy relationship with God, is like. When your heart is broken, as it is sometimes, you don't seek fine words and you don't think through every sentence, you just say, "God I'm broken! Help me!" You don't pray at a distance, you don't use a script, you just run to your Daddy's arms. That is your position as a child of the King! A cry denotes fervency, it comes from deep in the soul.

Do you remember when Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane, this very language is used. Listen, Mark 14, it says, "Abba Father," these are Jesus' words in the garden of Gethsemane, praying to His Father. He says, "Abba Father, all things are possible for you but remove this cup from me and yet, not what I will but what you will." He was crying to His Daddy. My friends, because you have been adopted, you are now a child with a Daddy who loves you and who cares about you. May I just encourage you tonight to cry out to Him? You don't have to think about doing it right, just do it. Just lay it out there for Him, He can take it. When you're lonely, when you're grief-stricken, when you're tempted and troubled with fear, run to your Daddy! Your Abba, Father.

My friends, one of the greatest desires in my heart, and I know in many others, for Ethos is that we might be a place that loves and serves children well. I know that. We want to serve our own children well, we want to teach and to train and to model for them what it means to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. That's what we want for our children, that one day we might release them on the world, strong and mature in their faith, that they might go forward and advance the kingdom of God. That is our longing! But we want to love and serve well those children who are not as fortunate as our own, as we have heard from tonight. The orphan, the unwanted, the abused and the hungry. Oh, how I pray that God will give us a heart to love them well, as well, wisdom to know how best to help and courage to be able to act on our convictions. And if these dreams are realized, I think they will only be born out of an understanding of and a confidence in the fact that we are ourselves children who have a heavenly Daddy who loves and cares for us. We have been adopted and because of this one massive truth we can have a heart for others and long for them to be adopted too. Let's pray.