

The Ordo Salutis

The Order of Salvation

Step 10- Adoption

As of 03/20/22

“Nobody is born into this world a child of the family of God. We are born as children of wrath. The only way we enter into the family of God is by adoption, and that adoption occurs when we are united to God’s only begotten Son by faith. When by faith we are united with Christ, we are then adopted into that family of whom Christ is the firstborn.” - RC Sproul

“Who is to have authority in the matter of gracious adoption? The children of wrath? Surely not; and yet all men are such! No, it stands to reason, to common sense, that none but the parent can have the discretion to adopt.” ~ Charles Spurgeon

“The spirit of prayer is the fruit and token of the Spirit of adoption.” ~ John Newton

“Adoption is a greater mercy than Adam had in paradise.” ~ Thomas Watson

“The Gospel is not a picture of adoption, adoption is a picture of the Gospel.” ~ John Piper

“Before orphans can enjoy the love and care of a new family, they must be legally adopted. Adoption, like justification, is simultaneously legal and relational”- Michael Horton

“Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption. . . . Of all the gifts of grace, adoption is the highest”.- JI Packer

“What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as Father.”- JI Packer

“The term ‘adoption’ (used here in older English versions [of Romans 12:15] may have a somewhat artificial sound in our ears; but in the Roman world of the first century AD an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature, and might well enjoy the father’s affection more fully and reproduce the father’s character more worthily.”- FF Bruce

“Adoption gives us the privilege of sons because regeneration is the nature of sons.”- Stephen Charnock

“God’s Holy Spirit confirms the validity of our adoption, not by some inner, mystical voice, but by the fruit He produces (Gal. 5:22-23) and the power He provides for spiritual service (Ac. 1:8).”- John MacArthur

“Who is to have authority in the matter of gracious adoption? The children of wrath? Surely not; and yet all men are such! No, it stands to reason, to common sense, that none but the parent can have the discretion to adopt.”- CH Spurgeon

“Since God has 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.”- Thomas Watson

Definition of Adoption

Adoption is the admission of a believer into the Family of God, positionally, as sons and daughters. Adoption is the sovereign Act of God that immediately follows “Justification”.

But while we greatly benefit from Adoption- we do NOT cooperate with God in our own Adoption.

Adoption was God’s Plan from the Beginning

Romans 8:14-25

14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope

21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?

25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

Ephesians 1:3-6a

3 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,

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace...

Adoption is NOT taught often nor very well

Now, normally, people, who say they believe in Adoption will say something like, “*Adoption brings us into the Family of God.*” And that’s true- but that is usually the end of the discussion. Why is there not more Teaching about this important subject? So, in this Study we want to explore several Questions:

- What exactly does it mean for God to adopt us and bring us into His Family?
- What are the Benefits to us and the Responsibilities we must live under now that we are a part of God’s Family?
- Is the “Family of God” the same thing as the “Church?”

Here in **Ephesians 1:4b&5**- the Apostle Paul taught that God *predestined* us to Adoption. And the practical application of that Truth is that Adoption was NOT some afterthought- nor some Effort by God to correct the Problem of Mankind having fallen through the rebellion of Adam. Instead, the Bible teaches that Adoption was God’s fore-ordained Plan from the very beginning. So, before God created anything- He decreed that guilty sinners would be graciously brought into His Family by what He alone did for them.

Galatians 4:1-7

1 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything,

2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

The biblical Foundation for the Act of adopting children is *primarily* in the New Testament rather than the Old. There are only three Adoptions mentioned in the entire Old Testament (Moses, Esther, Mephibosheth **2Samuel 9**; and Genubath **1Kings 11:20**). But Israel was also called “God’s son” (**Exodus 4:22**; **Deuteronomy 14:1**; **32:6**; **Jeremiah 31:9**; and **Hosea 11:1**) but it isn’t until the New Testament that this is called and Adoption.

The Foundation of Adoption

The deepest and strongest Foundation for Adoption is not located in the Act of humans adopting other humans- but in God adopting humans. And while this Act is *not* part of His ordinary Providence in the world- it is at the very Heart of the Gospel.

Galatians 4:4&5 is as central a Gospel Statement as there is anywhere in the Bible:

**4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,
5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.**

Now God did not have to use the Concept of Adoption to explain how He saved us, or even how we become part of His Family- but He did. God could have stayed with the language of New Birth so that all His children were described as children by nature only:

John 1:12&13

**12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,
13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**

John 1:12&13

**12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—
13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (NIV)**

So, God chose to speak of us as *adopted* as well as being children by the *New Birth*. And this is the most *essential* Foundation of the Practice of natural Adoption today.

Eight Similarities

What I would like to do is lay out eight similarities between what God did in Adoption and what happens in a Christian Adoption today. I pray that whether you have adopted, or are engaged in assisting Adoptions, or are pondering an Adoption, God will use these comparisons to heighten your Confidence that God is graciously involved in our Adoptions. He has done it Himself. He knows what it costs. And He stands ready to support us all the way to the end.

1. Adoption was (for God) and is (for us) costly.

Galatians 4:4b&5

**4 ...when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,
5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.**

Now to redeem something means: to obtain; or to set free by paying a price. What was the Price that God paid for our Liberation and Adoption?

Galatians 3:13&14

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—

14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

... so, Adoption cost God the Price of His dear Son's Life.

Now there are always huge Costs in adopting children. Some are financial; some are emotional. There are Costs in time and stress for the rest of your life. Once you have children—either naturally or through Adoption— you never stop being a Parent till you die. And the Stresses of caring about adult children can be as great, or greater, than the stresses of caring for young children. There is something very deep and right about the Embrace of this Cost for the Life of a child!

Few things bring me more Satisfaction than seeing young believers voluntarily enter into a Culture of Adoption. Because that means that these Parents are looking to their heavenly Father for their Joy rather than rejecting the Stress and Cost of children in order to maximize their own Freedom and Comforts. When people embrace the Pain and the Joy of children rather than using Abortion or Birth Control simply to keep children away— the Worth of Christ shines more visibly. Adoption is as far away as possible from the sinful mindset of this pagan world that rejects children as being “an Intrusion.” Praise God for people ready to embrace the Suffering— known and unknown. But God's Cost to adopt us was infinitely greater than any Cost we might endure in adopting and raising children.

2. Adoption did (for God) and does (for us) involve *the legal status* of the child.

Galatians 4:4-6

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

In our Adoption— there were “Legal Realities” God had to deal with. His Own Justice and Law *demand*ed that we be punished and excluded from His Presence for the Guilt of our Sins. Righteousness was *required* and Punishment *demand*ed. God had to satisfy His Own Justice and His Law in order to adopt sinners into His Family. And He did this through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ.

This means that the Status of being a “son” legally *preceded* the experience of the Spirit coming to give us the Affections of sons. We are *legally* sons *before* we experience the Joy of “sonship”. The objective Work of our Salvation (two thousand years ago at Calvary) precedes and grounds the subjective Experience of our Salvation by the Spirit today.

And so it is with our adopting children today: The legal Transactions *precede* and *undergird* the growth of family Feelings. If the legal “red tape” seems long and hard, keep in mind that this tape is not yet red with your blood, but Jesus satisfied all the legal Demands precisely by shedding His Blood.

3. Adoption was blessed and is blessed with God’s pouring out *a Spirit of Sonship*.

Galatians 4:6

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

Romans 8:15-17

15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

God does not leave us in the Condition of being aliens when He adopts us. He does not leave us with no feelings of Acceptance and Love. Rather, He pours His Spirit into our hearts to give us the experience of being embraced in the Family. And what is remarkable about these two texts is the term, “*Abba*.” This is an Aramaic word. So, why does Paul use it, transliterated, in these two letters (**Romans** and **Galatians**) written in Greek?

The Answer is that it was the way Jesus spoke to His Father, in spite of the fact that virtually no one in Jewish Culture referred to God with this endearing word, “*Abba*.” It stunned the disciples. They held onto it as a precious Remnant of the very Voice of Jesus in the language He spoke.

In **Mark 14:36**, Jesus is in Gethsemane and prays, “*Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Remove this cup from Me. Yet not what I will, but what You will.*” Therefore, in adopting us, God give us the very Spirit of His Son and grants us to experience the godly Affections of belonging to the very Family of God.

In the Mercy of God, in our families, God works to awaken Affections in adopted children for their Parents that are far more than mere “legal outcomes”. These Affections are deeply personal and spiritual “bonds” that connect the adopted child to their Parents. Adopted children do not *infer* that they are our children by checking out the adoption papers. No, a spirit pervades our Relationship that bears witness to this Reality. Like the other children in the family, the adopted children all cry to their Father, “*Daddy*.” And the Father hears their cry.

So, we should praise the Lord that He gave us *both* “legal Standing” as His children *and* the very Spirit of His Son so that we find ourselves saying from a heart of deep Conviction, “*Abba, Father!*”

We Will Suffer

Romans 8:16&17

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

So, the flip side is also true. Adopted children will suffer along with the children of Birth. As far as the world is concerned- the adopted children are now part of the despised and mocked Family. And so, the Apostle teaches that the adopted children will suffer along side those who were children by natural Birth.

In fact, it is the Reality of our Suffering that signifies that we are NOT merely “legally adopted children” but that we have taken on the characteristics and the ways of the Family of God. We talk like we belong in the Family and we walk like we belong in the Family. So, we live our lives in accord with the Scriptures- just like all the others in the Family. And that is what precipitates our Suffering.

4. Adoption was (for God) and is (for us) marked by *Moral Transformation* through the Spirit.

Romans 8:14

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

God does not leave His children without Help to bear the moral Image of the Family. So, we may also trust that His Help will be there for *our* children as we bring them under the Means of Grace that God uses to awaken and transform His children.

5. Adoption brought us, and brings our children, the Rights and Responsibilities of being *Heirs of the Father*.

Galatians 4:6&7

6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

Romans 8:16&17

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

Notice that **Galatians 4:7** says we are heirs “*through* God” and then **Romans 8:17** says we are heirs “*of* God.” In **Galatians**, the context is the Promise of Abraham- through God- that is, by His sending His Son to redeem us, we are heirs with Abraham- (even though we are Gentiles!) of his Inheritance, namely the whole *world!*

Romans 4:13

For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.

... but in **Romans 8:17**- the context is that we, with Christ, are heirs of all that God has, namely, everything.

1 Corinthians 3:21-23

**21 So then let no one boast in men. For all things belong to you,
22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you,
23 and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God.**

6. Adoption was (for God) and is (for us) seriously *planned*.

Ephesians 1:4-6

**4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love
5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,
6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.**

This tells me that Adoption was in God's Mind from the very beginning. And that means it was NOT "Plan B." God predestined us for Adoption before the creation of the world. And that means that "Plan A" was NOT lots of children, who never sin; and who never need to be forgiven and made Righteous. No, "Plan A" was Creation; the Fall; Redemption; and then Adoption- so that the full range of God's Glory and Mercy and Grace could be known by His adopted children. So, Adoption was NOT a secondary Concept after God saw Adam fall. It was planned and ordained and decreed from the very beginning.

In our lives, there is something uniquely precious about having children by birth. That is a good Plan. But there is also something different, but also uniquely precious, about adopting children. Each has its own Uniqueness. Your choice to adopt children may be sequentially second. But it does not have to be *secondary*. It can be as precious and significant as having children by birth. And God is able to make Adoption precious and unique in our lives.

7. Adoption was (for God) and often is now (for us) *from very bad situations*.

Ephesians 2:1-3

**1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,
2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.
3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.**

God did not find us like an abandoned child- bundled on the front step and irresistibly cute. He found us ugly and evil and rebellious and dirty with many Sins. We were not attractive to God. And we would not be easy children to deal with. And, what's worse, God Himself was angry with us. Because the one, true, and living God of the Bible hates Sin and Rebellion. So, we were doubly "children of Wrath!"

But we are also the ones God pursued in Adoption. Therefore, all of God's Adoptions crossed a greater moral and cultural Divide than any of our adoptions could. The distance between what we are, and what God is- is infinitely greater than any distance between us and a child we might adopt. So, God crossed the greatest cultural Barrier to redeem and adopt us.

Consider too, that according to **Romans 9:4-** the people that God chose in the Old Testament, the Israelites, were adopted out of a terrible situation.

Romans 9:3-5

**3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh,
4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises,
5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.**

But how was this Adoption effected?

Hosea 11:1

When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.

Israel was slaves in Egypt. While we were "spiritual slaves" in "Egypt's Sin". They were often rebellious against God. So, were we.

Psalm 106:7

Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea.

... therefore, God went and took a son from Egypt (Moses); who was both enslaved and rebellious himself. And God used that "son" as a Pattern for us.

So, for us- God took on flesh and became Man (Jesus). And He lived among men and was every bit a human Man. And that Son became Sin for us- so that we might be adopted as be displayed as the very Righteousness of God- by what this Son alone did for us in living and dying and rising again!

So, the Pattern is now set: Adoptions do not just come from nice, healthy, safe, auspicious situations. God chose some of the worst people on earth- so that He alone might be glorified!

8. Adoption meant (for all Christians) and means (for Christian Parents) that *we suffer now and experience Glory later.*

Romans 8:22&23

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Now this strikes us as Strange. Aren't we already adopted? Why does Paul say that we are "waiting eagerly for our adoption"? Yes, we are already adopted. When Christ died for us, the Price was paid. And when we trust Him and in Him- we are legally and permanently in the Family. But God's purpose for Adoption is not to leave any of His children in a State of groaning and suffering. He raised Jesus from the dead with a new Body, and He promises that part of our Adoption will be a new resurrection body- with no more disabilities and no more groaning- and completely unable to Sin.

Therefore, what we wait for- is the *full experience* of our Adoption- the END of our Adoption- which is the resurrection of our bodies- or the glorification of our bodies!

Now there is much groaning in the Path of Adoption on the way to full and complete Salvation. But the outcome is glorious. It is worth it all.

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

... and this is especially relevant for Parents of children with Disabilities. They know the "Groaning" of this life. All of us have children with some sort of Disability, and some of us will live to get very old and watch our children age and die before we do. Others will see their children struck down in War; or by Accident; or Disease. Others will care for a disabled child till one of them dies. But all of this Groaning is groaning in Hope because we are adopted by God and destined for a glorious Resurrection and an eternal Future of perfect Health and Wholeness and unspeakable Joy. Truly, it will be worth it all!

What is Adoption?

Adoption is one of the primary Benefits of the saving Work of Jesus Christ applied to the elect by Faith. In Justification, God vindicates guilty sinners in the Divine Law Court by declaring them "Righteous" in His Sight. In Adoption, He makes those who are already justified- His beloved children with whom He dwells. According to God's covenant Promise, believers are made "sons and daughters of God"- Heirs according to the Promise of Redemption.

Like Justification, Adoption is a once-for-all, nonrepeatable, sovereign Act of God. Though distinguished from the ongoing process of Sanctification, Adoption ensures the restoration of God's Likeness in His adopted sons and daughters. The Doctrine of Adoption is taught in redemptive History in Old Testaments "Types". It is fulfilled in Christ and comes to full spiritual fruition in the New Testament. As with the other Benefits of Redemption, the Holy Spirit is *particularly* revealed in our Adoption. The Holy Spirit is the "Spirit of Adoption" on the basis of His Work in this Act of Redemption.

Explanation

The Doctrine of Adoption is one of the central Benefits of "Redemption Applied". In Justification, God forgives guilty sinners and accepts them as Righteous in His Sight only on account of the Blood and Righteousness of Jesus Christ. In Adoption, He brings those who were once enemies into the Family of God-giving them an Eternal Inheritance. In this way, the Benefits of Christ's Death and Resurrection bring sinners from the Law Court to the living room. Though Adoption logically follows Justification in the Ordo Salutis, it is no less important in the

Experience of Salvation. So, Adoption is *similar* to Justification yet distinct from Progressive Sanctification in that it is a one-time act of God.

In his Book, “*Knowing God*”, J.I. Packer famously observed,

“If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father.”

The English Puritans held that Adoption was the central Benefit of Redemption, inasmuch as it encompasses the totality of what it means to be brought into a saving Relationship with God as our Father. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “**Our Father . . .**” The Apostle Paul noted that every believer has the “**Spirit of Adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’**” (**Romans 8:15**). The Christian life simply cannot be lived in fruitful service to God unless it is lived in light of the Truth of the believer’s “sonship” in full Union with Jesus Christ.

