

Scripture Reading: Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:1

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 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 should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”

"Our Adoption is Final!"

Last week we considered why the Father chose us from before the foundation of the world, learning that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” We then considered some of the practical implications of this in our lives.

This morning we will see more of the intimacy involved in this relationship and another reminder about the security of our position when the Apostle Paul continues by saying:

5 “having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”

Next week we will return to the theme of God’s glory and why that is so important...

- But for this week I want to focus on just what Paul means when he declares that God predestined us to adoption as sons.”

Now I hope you can see that this is closely related to what we learned last week, because certainly those who are adopted as God’s sons must be holy and blameless before God in love!

- Remembering that fact helps us to see the wonder in what Paul is teaching here!
- We not only stand before God, we stand before Him as His sons, as His adopted sons.

It might be good, as Pastor Lloyd-Jones did to mention something about the English translations of the Bible.

- What were the original languages in which the Spirit guided men to write the Bible?

That is right, we have Hebrew and Greek with a bit of Aramaic. God’s revelation consists of 66 books written by some 40 men over 1,500 years. It tells the story of God’s salvation with complete unity, which would be impossible for mere men~ The reason that Pastor Martin took note of translations here is because there are some significant differences in how our English versions translate this verse. These are not differences based on variations among the Greek texts that we have, but rather how the scholars chose to translate the Greek into English.

If you have a King James Bible you will see children rather than sons which the New King James uses along with most other English translations. Sort of interesting considering how gender sensitive we have become today. Of course that does not impact what is being taught significantly but when the Revised Standard version leaves out the word adoption, it does seem like a major omission with no basis in the actual text.

It is a reminder about why we use the New King James as our pulpit Bible:

- It is very readable & yet translated faithfully from the most reliable Greek and Hebrew texts that have come down to us in history.
- So why is this concept of being adopted or adoption important?

It is interesting to note that it is only the Apostle Paul who uses this term. Now in recent weeks we have studied various words that have been used hundreds of times in the Bible, which gave us a means to determine what is meant and to remember the proper context. Here with the word adopted we find a rare word with no Jewish history, but rather one from the Roman world. Remember that Paul was a Roman citizen writing to the Gentiles in a very Roman world...

- And adoption was something they would have understood.

Being a citizen of Rome was very important and highly coveted... We still see benefits of citizenship as Americans, but it is hard for us to imagine the contrast with non-citizens when compared with the Roman culture. Today those who live among us who are not citizens cannot vote, but can often live the same type of life a citizen would including legal rights and the right to own property. It would not have been so in Rome and in fact most who were not citizens were conquered people and/or slaves.

There were only three ways to be a Roman citizen:

- You were born to Roman parents.
- You purchased your citizenship.
- You were adopted by Roman parents.

And it is important to remember that a son who was a natural born son was considered the equal of an adopted son. And again that citizenship was very important... [Mention Ben Hur].

Now in our modern times we are also familiar with adoption so we should have a good understanding of what Paul is communicating here... But it is always good to remember the significance of being adopted... [share personal examples]

- Now when we think about adoption in this context we see how powerful the examples the Apostle Paul uses elsewhere really are!

First, although as I mentioned it was not part of Jewish history, Paul includes it among their blessings when he grieves for his fellow Jews in Romans Chapter 9:

“For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”

It is ironic that those Israelites were so proud of their special position as God’s people, but never really understood who their Messiah would be and do, nor the special place God wanted His people to have.

Next, we see Paul showing the intimacy of our relationship first in the letter to the Galatians and then in Romans:

Galatians 4:4 “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!””

God does not just want us to intellectually understand that we have been adopted, but rather has the Spirit touch our hearts so we are like that young child who runs to a father returning from work or a trip crying out daddy, daddy.

We see the same concept in Romans 8 in a very familiar passage:

Romans 8:14 “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 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.” 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

And while we can know that we will spend eternity with our Father in glorified bodies, we still face struggles in this life... Thus Paul is quick to remind us that these temporary struggles should not dim the hope that we have as God's adopted Sons and Daughters... Continuing on just a bit later in that same chapter Paul says,

Romans 8:22 "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. ²³ 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. ²⁴ 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?"

At this point Dr. Lloyd-Jones shares a bit of a warning that I think is important for us to remember: "We must safeguard this doctrine by the following consideration. While we rejoice in the fact that we are the sons of God – the sons of God in Jesus Christ, -- we must be careful to draw a clear distinction between His Sonship and our sonship, lest we go astray... We are 'the sons of God, but we are not sons of God in the same way as the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is the Son of God by eternal generation; we are the sons of God by adoption. It was because of this distinction that our Lord at the end of His earthly life said to one of His disciples: 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.' He did not say, 'I ascend to our Father and our God.' Our sonship is derivative, we derive it from Him; it is because we have been adopted 'in Him.'"

So yes, we have been adopted by God into His family. We are no longer children of Adam, but we are now sons and daughters of God in Christ!

We can see the importance of this distinction from a discussion that Jesus had with the religious leaders of His day who were loyal to the wrong father: We pick up the discussion in John 8: "37 "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.

38 I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father."

- Notice that Jesus speaks of two fathers and the religious leaders are quick to pick up on that distinction...

39 "They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father.""

- Jesus already admitted that they were human descendants of Abraham, but He now points out that being a true son of Abraham would mean bearing fruit...

"Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. 41 You do the deeds of your father."

- Again, Jesus points to a second father and now the religious leaders become very defensive...

"Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father—God." 42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me."

- Which father a person has makes a real difference and Jesus drives home this point with two simple questions:

"46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God."

- Jesus challenges them by asking what His sin is: What of what He said or did was not true?

Of course they could find no fault and then He simply asks them why they do not then believe the truth?

- They cannot because they have the wrong father.

And thus we should rejoice as those who have been adopted because now we can hear the truth...

As we mentioned last week, the Christian life for an adopted son or daughter is not drudgery but joy.

We don't study our Bible out of some legalistic obligation...

- But rather because as His children we can hear God and should be excited day by day as He opens our eyes to new truths from His Word!
- We should be excited because He has sent His Spirit to help us walk as His children day by day!

We were reminded of this in our reading for Wednesday this week from

Psalm 71 where we read in part: "14 But I will hope continually, And will praise You yet more and more. 15 My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness And Your salvation all the day, For I do not know their limits. 16 I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD; I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only."

- The Psalmist has put God first in his youth & his old age...

"17 O God, You have taught me from my youth; And to this day I declare Your wondrous works. 18 Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to everyone who is to come."

And finally as we come to the close of Paul's introduction we see once more how the focus here and in our lives must always be on God: 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved."

Paul began his powerful introduction with '2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.' And as he prepares to move on he returns to the pleasure of God's will and praising the glory of His grace.

Yes, it is all about God's grace as we will consider again in two weeks!

As we close this morning, we can remember the hymn writer John Newton who knew what it meant to be adopted into God's family and he was amazed at God's grace which took him from being an evil slave trader on the high seas to a minister in God's Church.

He knew the Gospel was good news, a sweet sound for such a wretch as him.

- He was now in God's family as a man who had been found, adopted into God's family, so he could see and hear Jesus!

Communion Meditation: Romans 8

"37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. 38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, 39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."