



GRACE

Reformed Baptist Church

Soli ◇ Deo ◇ Gloria

HOW GREAT A SALVATION, Part 5 Understanding the *Ordo Salutis* [Order of Salvation] of God Adoption as Sons

Romans 8:28-30

July 20, 2008

- 1.) The Covenant of Redemption [Decrees of God]
- 2.) Election
- 3.) The Outward Gospel Call
- 4.) Regeneration
- 5.) Conversion [Faith / Repentance]
- 6.) Justification
- 7.) Adoption
- 8.) Sanctification
- 9.) Perseverance
- 10.) Death
- 11.) Glorification

James 1:27 states, ‘Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress...’

- ❑ This passage in James may, at first glance, seem to exist as a call to Christians to participate in social reforms for the sake of “orphans and widows.”
- ❑ However, although it is true that, by extension, the Gospel has a social component, this is not truly the essence of this verse.
- ❑ The reason is that these types of actions – visiting the orphans and widows in their distress – models the activity of God towards His children.
- ❑ A common expression is, “God helps those who help themselves.” Yet, this saying reveals a fundamentally flawed understanding of who God is and who man is.

- ❑ A more biblical expression would be, “God helps those who are unable to help themselves.”
- ❑ And this is why James 1:27 is significant. Widows and orphans, especially in the Ancient Near East, were groups who were helpless outcasts in society. They had no one to care for them and were greatly to be pitied.
- ❑ This, of course, is an accurate description of how we were, apart from Christ – without any hope...wholly unable to do anything to save ourselves.
- ❑ We were, once again, dead in our trespasses and sins [Ephesians 2:1,5; Colossians 2:13]; enemies of God [Romans 8:7]; and by nature children of wrath [Ephesians 2:3].

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All those that are justified, God vouchsafed, in and for the sake of his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have his name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him as by a Father, yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption, and inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation.

Chapter 12: Adoption, *Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*

- ❑ The Greek word for adoption [*huiiothesia*] is found strictly in Paul’s writings [Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4; Galatians 4:5-7; Ephesians 1:5]; however, the concept of becoming children of God is found elsewhere throughout the New Testament.

“I suggest that just as Romans is Paul’s treatise on justification so Ephesians is in a special sense Paul’s treatise on the Fatherhood of God and the doctrine of adoption.”

Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, p. 760

- ❑ Although adoption is rarely taught in the contemporary church, as John Murray correctly wrote: “This doctrine of adoption [sets] forth the apex of redemptive grace and privilege.”

I. Adoption Reveals God's Love for His People

- ❑ The first truth concerning our adoption by God as His children is that this act reveals the LORD’s love for His people.

Ephesians 1:3-6

“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 would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”

1 John 3:1-2

“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”

- In this context, an evaluation of **Romans 8:28-30** is especially helpful:

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.”

- From this passage, one gains a better understanding into the nature, not only of our calling and justification, but our adoption as well.
- In his commentary of **Romans 8:28-30**, Dr. Douglas Moo, of Wheaton College, states, “In the six occurrences [of the Greek word for *foreknow*, γινωσκω, *ginosko*] in the New Testament, only two mean ‘know beforehand’ (Acts 26:5; 2 Peter 3:17); the three others besides the occurrence in this text [Romans 8:29], all of which have God as their subject, mean not ‘no before’ – in the sense of intellectual knowledge, or cognition – but ‘enter into relationship with before’ or ‘choose, or determine before’ [Romans 11:2; 1 Peter 1:20; Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:2].”
- Dr. Moo continues, “That the verb here contains this peculiarly biblical sense of ‘know’ is suggested by the fact that it has a simple personal object. Paul does not say that God knew anything about us but that He knew *us*, and this is reminiscent of the Old Testament sense of know” as well.
- The idea is that God loved us prior to us knowing and loving Him.
- It is amazing in our own experience of adoption, how, even in the imperfect love that we as humans possess, that we could love our adoptive children even now, before we actually know them. How much more does God, who is infinite in His love, and unbounded by time and space, love us, His people, before we know Him.
- ...And on the basis of this love, God pursues us, His people.

II. Adoption Reveals God's Pursuit of His People

- ❑ Not only does adoption reveal God's love for His people, but it also reveals us pursuit of them.
- ❑ Left to their own devices, every human who has ever lived, or ever will live [save Christ alone] would die in condemnation for his sin, without any hope.
- ❑ Yet, those whom God foreknew ["fore-loved"], He pursued and called and brought them into His family.
- ❑ One of the most beautiful scenes in all of Scripture that demonstrates this truth is to be found in **2 Samuel 9**, where David pursues the son of Jonathan [the grandson of Saul].

“Then David said, ‘Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?’ Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David; and the king said to him, ‘Are you Ziba?’ And he said, ‘I am your servant.’ The king said, ‘Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?’ And Ziba said to the king, ‘There is still a son of Jonathan who is crippled in both feet.’ So the king said to him, ‘Where is he?’ And Ziba said to the king, ‘Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel in Lo-debar.’ Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar.”

III. Adoption Involves Great Sacrifice

- ❑ The next truth is that Adoption involves great sacrifice.
- ❑ In modern culture, adopting a child involves great sacrifice: it takes a great deal of time and is a sacrifice emotionally and financially.
- ❑ However, our adoption as sons involved the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the only Son of God.

Galatians 4:5

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

- ❑ Author and theologian Robert Reymond writes, ‘Throughout the New Testament, the concept of adoption is ever-present. The writers of the New Testament often used words such as ‘**son**’ [2 Corinthians 6:18; Galatians 3:26; 4:6-7; Hebrews 2:10; 12:5-8; Revelation 21:7], ‘**child**’ [John 1:12; 11:52; 1 John 3:1, 10; 5:2; Romans 8:16, 21; 9:8; Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 2:15], ‘**little child**’ [Hebrews

2:13-14] and ‘sonship’ [Romans 18:15, 23; Galatians 4:5; Ephesians 1:5; Romans 9:4] to demonstrate the change in relationship with the Father that we experience on the basis of the finished work of Jesus Christ.”

- The cost of our adoption was not only the righteous life of our Lord Jesus Christ, but His obedience unto death on a cross, where He fully exhausted the wrath of God the Father toward our sins.

IV. Through Adoption, God Bridges an Infinite Gulf

- The next truth of our adoption as sons is that through adoption, God bridges an infinite gulf between us, His people, and Himself.
- The problem we face is that Man is Sinful and God is Holy; yet, once again, through the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully Man, the infinite Gap between God and Man is bridged...by God!
- In fact, this is why the Apostle Paul makes it clear that *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*
- Therefore, regardless of culture or ethnicity, an impassable gulf separates us from God. It is a chasm that no man, regardless of how ‘righteous’ his is, could ever even begin to cross. Yet, it is not until one understands this infinite gap that separates sinful man from the one true, living, and holy God, that he or she can even begin to grasp the unfathomable miracle revealed through our adoption into God’s family. We are finite and sinful...God is infinite and holy! No degree of human effort, regardless of how sincere, could even begin to bridge the gap that separates us from our Creator. Yet, God, who is infinitely rich in divine mercy, chose, in accordance with the council of *His own* will, to condescend to us, through the Person of Jesus Christ, and save His people. It is through the redemptive work of Christ, and the regenerative work of the Holy Spirit, that God the Father has adopted us as His children. This is, indeed, a miracle of infinite proportions...one that the mind can never fully comprehend.
- It is only when we understand the infinite gap that separates us from God that the ‘gap’ separating us from other humans in other races is ultimately put into proper perspective.
- People often ‘inform’ Kimberly and I of the great cultural and racial gap that will exist between us and our Ethiopian children. Yet, such concerns ultimately fade completely from our view when considered in light of the infinite, eternal gap that God bridged, through the work of Jesus Christ, in order to reconcile us to Him.

Ephesians 2:19

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,”

V. Adoption is a Gift of God Received through Faith in Christ

- ❑ The next truth in adoption is that, like justification, the instrument through which God adopts us is faith in Christ.

John 1:12-13

“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, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

VI. Through Adoption God Blesses His People as His Own Children

- ❑ Finally, and one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest truths, of adoption is that because of our adoption as children of God, our LORD blesses us as His own.
- ❑ That is, because we are declared righteous through justification, we are blessed accordingly as children of God.

A.H. Strong, in his *Systematic Theology* writes, “Justification is more than remission or acquittal. This would leave the sinner simply in the position of a discharged criminal – law requires a positive righteousness also. Besides deliverance from punishment, justification implies God’s treatment of the sinner as if he was, and had been, personally righteous. The justified person receives not only remission of penalty, but the rewards promised to obedience.”

Revelation 21:7

“He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My Son.”

Galatians 3:26-29

“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise.”

a. We Have Access to God as Father

- The first aspect of our blessings as children of God is that we have access to Him as Father.
- In His high priestly prayer, Jesus mentions this as the essence of eternal life:

John 17:2

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

- Paul echoes this truth in his epistles.

Ephesians 3:12

“in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.”

- Notice, as well, the Trinitarian aspect of this truth:

Romans 8:15-17

“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!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, 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.”

Galatians 4:6

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

"Some textbooks on Christian doctrine... treat adoption as a mere sub-section of justification, but this is inadequate. The two ideas are distinct, and adoption is the more exalted. Justification is a *forensic* idea, conceived in terms of *law* and viewing God as *judge*. In justification, God declares of penitent believers that they are not, and never will be, liable to the death that their sins deserve, because Jesus Christ, their substitute and sacrifice, tasted death in their place on the cross. This free gift of acquittal and peace, won for us at the cost of Calvary, is wonderful enough, in all conscience - but justification does not of itself imply any intimate or deep relationship with God the judge. In idea, at any rate, you could have the reality of justification without any close fellowship with God resulting. But contrast this, now, with adoption. Adoption is a *family* idea, conceived in terms of *love*, and viewing God as *father*. In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship, and establishes us as His children and heirs. Closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the father is greater.”

J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, pp. 187- 188

b. We Are Comforted Knowing that God is Our Father

- As children of God, we are also comforted by Him as our Father:

1 Peter 5:7

“casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”

Psalm 103:13

“Just as a father has compassion on his children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.”

- Not only to we experience comfort now, in our present difficulties, but we have the comfort of a future hope.

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.”

c. We Have the Eternal Security and Sealing by the Holy Spirit

- Another blessing of our adoption is that we are secure in Christ, sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:13

“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,”

Ephesians 4:30

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

- Furthermore, Paul’s use of the adoption metaphor should be understood in light of a Roman context. In Roman law, an adopted child could never be disowned; whereas, a biological child could. Paul, no doubt, knew this when using the adoption analogy.

d. We Are Disciplined as Sons

- The next benefit and blessing of sonship is that God disciplines us.

Hebrews 12:6

“FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES.”

- This may not, at first, seem like a blessing in Christ; however, it most certainly is.

- Biblical discipline always leads to comfort, security, and hope.

Hebrews 12:11

“All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.”

e. We Are United with Christ and Co-Heirs with Him

- As with our justification, our adoption must be understood in light of our Union with Christ.
- That is, as co-heirs with Christ, we are blessed as He is.

Ephesians 3:6

“to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,”

Romans 8:17

“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.”

- Read the story of Mephibosheth: **2 Samuel 9:1-13**

“Then David said, ‘Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?’ Now there was a servant of the house of Saul whose name was Ziba, and they called him to David; and the king said to him, ‘Are you Ziba?’ And he said, ‘I am your servant.’ The king said, ‘Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?’ And Ziba said to the king, ‘There is still a son of Jonathan who is crippled in both feet.’ So the king said to him, ‘Where is he?’ And Ziba said to the king, ‘Behold, he is in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel in Lo-debar.’ Then King David sent and brought him from the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo-debar. Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and prostrated himself. And David said, ‘Mephibosheth.’ And he said, ‘Here is your servant!’ David said to him, ‘Do not fear, for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly.’ Again he prostrated himself and said, ‘What is your servant, that you should regard a dead dog like me?’ Then the king called Saul's servant Ziba and said to him, ‘All that belonged to Saul and to all his house I have given to your master's grandson. ‘You and your sons and your servants shall cultivate the land for him, and you shall bring in the produce so that your master's grandson may have food; nevertheless Mephibosheth your master's grandson shall eat at my table regularly.’ Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants. Then Ziba said to the king, ‘According to all that my lord the king commands his servant so your servant will do.’ So Mephibosheth ate at David's table as one of the king's sons.

Mephibosheth had a young son whose name was Mica. And all who lived in the house of Ziba were servants to Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he ate at the king's table regularly. Now he was lame in both feet.”

- Mephibosheth was of the biological family of the previous dynasty...A dynasty whose head [Saul] was an enemy of the current king, David.
 - As a result, Mephibosheth lived under a “death sentence.” The reason for this was that in the Ancient Near East, when a new dynasty rose to power, all relatives and claims to the throne of the previous dynasty were killed. This was done to eliminate the threat of an insurrection, coup, or attempt to overtake the throne once more.
 - Mephibosheth was lame and could not help himself. He was an outcast in society, one to be greatly pitied.
 - David sought Mephibosheth out, not vice versa.
 - David pursued Mephibosheth because of the love he had for another, Jonathan.
 - David chose to bless Mephibosheth for the sake of another, Jonathan.
 - David, because of his love for Jonathan, blessed Mephibosheth *as a son*.
- Most certainly, the great hope and inheritance that we await for is our bodily resurrection, that we might be like our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Romans 8:23

“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.”

VII. The Ultimate Purpose of Adoption is the Glory of God Alone

- Finally, as with all truths of the Scriptures, the ultimate purpose of our Adoption is the glory of God alone.

Ephesians 1:3-6

“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 would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”