

Adoption - Placed As Sons

Rom 8:12-17

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 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, 17 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. NKJV

This word, adoption is found in just five passages in the New Testament and they are all Paul's writings. Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5

“The term adoption is filled with the ideas of love, grace, compassion, and intimate relationship. It is the action by which a husband and wife decide to take a boy or girl who is not their physical offspring into their family as their own child. When that action is taken by the proper legal means, the adopted child attains all the rights and privileges of a member of the family.” MacArthur

Paul picks out this word to further show us the relationship that we have in Jesus Christ.

Some of the words Paul has used already are salvation, justification, redemption and he has alluded to the new birth in regeneration.

William Evans explains the relationship of these words to the believer. “Regeneration begins the new life in the soul; justification deals with the new attitude of God towards that soul, or perhaps better, of that soul towards God ; adoption admits man into the family of God with filial joy. Regeneration has to do with our change in nature; justification, with our change in standing; sanctification, with our change in character'; adoption, with our change in position. In regeneration the believer becomes a child of God (John 1 :12, 13) ; in adoption, the believer, already a child, receives a place as an adult son ; thus the child becomes a son, the minor becomes an adult (Gal. 4 :1-7).” *Great Doctrines of the Bible*

Some (Shafer) claim that adoption is so similar to redemption and justification that they do not even address the subject of adoption. Gill has a different view. “Though I am of opinion they are distinct blessings of grace, and so to be considered: adoption is a distinct thing from either justification or pardon. A subject may be acquitted by his sovereign from charges laid against him; and a criminal, convicted and condemned, may be pardoned, yet does not become his son; if adopted, and taken into his family, it must be by a distinct and fresh act of royal favour.” *Body of Divinity* By far Gill gives the best expose of this subject.

To understand the passage we need at least the basics of the doctrine of adoption. Then we can look at what the passage tells us.

- I. Paul uses this term to tell us once again that our position before God is due to grace alone.
 - A. The best example of this is that of King David and Mephibosheth (MacArthur)

1. 2 Sam. 9:1-13
2. “In many ways, David’s adoption of Mephibosheth pictures God’s adoption of believers.
3. David took the initiative in seeking out Mephibosheth and bringing him to the palace.
4. And although Mephibosheth was the son of David’s closest friend, he was also the grandson and sole heir of Saul, who had sought repeatedly to kill David.
5. Being crippled in both feet, Mephibosheth was helpless to render David any significant service;
6. He could only accept his sovereign’s bounty.
7. The very name Mephibosheth means “a shameful thing,”
8. And he had lived for a number of years in Lo-debar, which means “the barren land” (lit., “no pasture”).
9. David brought this outcast to dine at his table as his own son and graciously granted him a magnificent inheritance to which he was no longer legally entitled.” MacArthur Commentary on Romans 1-8
10. 2 Cor 6:18 “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.”

B. A Roman Adoption

1. The one adopted did not hold a second class status in the family for although a father could disown his natural child he could not do so with the adopted son.
2. At the death of the father the favored adopted son could even receive the major inheritance over the natural born children.
3. “The first step totally severed the boy’s legal and social relationship to his natural family and the second step placed him permanently into his new family. In addition to that, all of his previous debts and other obligations were eradicated, as if they had never existed.” MacArthur Commentary

C. Unlike a Roman adoption there was nothing in us that moved God to adopt us.

1. Pharaoh’s daughter was moved with compassion and pity for the babe in the basket and she took him as her own son and he grew up as heir of Pharaoh.
2. Mordecai took Esther as his daughter and took care of her for she was a close relation and she was beautiful.

3. But like everything else that we have in Christ Jesus, it is all of grace that there could be no boasting. Eph 2:8-9
- D. Unlike a civil adoption the one adopted does not essentially change.
1. If he is a fool, so he will be a fool.
 2. If he will be an embarrassment to the father so he will.
 3. But when God adopts us He also gives us His Holy Spirit to change our very nature and to make us like our new Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.
 4. Therefore by the Holy Spirit we mortify the deeds of the flesh.
 5. We are then led by His Spirit.
- E. In the civil adoption the adopted came under all the benefits of the father.
1. All the children of God, his adopted ones, they are taught of God, by his Spirit, his ministers, his word and ordinances; they are trained up in the school of the church, and under the ministry of the word, and are instructed by the preaching of the gospel, and by precepts, promises, and providences; as for food,
 2. they are continually supplied with what is suitable for them, the sincere milk of the word for babes, and meat for strong men; they are fed with hidden manna, with marrow and fatness, with the finest of the wheat, with the richest dainties of the gospel feast:
 3. as for their clothing, it is change of raiment, clothing of wrought gold, raiment of needlework, a robe of righteousness, and garments of salvation; fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints:
 4. for their protection, they have angels to wait upon them and guard them, who encamp about them, to preserve them from their enemies, and have the care and charge of them, to keep them in their ways;
 5. yea, they are kept by the Lord himself, as the apple of his eye, being his dear sons and pleasant children:
 6. and the inheritance he has prepared for them, of which they are heirs, is among the saints in light; is incorruptible, undefiled, never fading, and eternal, and is even a kingdom and glory. Gill *Body of Divinity*

What a great blessing we have in Christ. “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.” Eph 1:3-6 NKJV