

The Order of Salvation - Adoption

Introduction

- Redemption applied: the 'Order of Salvation' = *calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption, sanctification, preservation & glorification.*

1. The Definition of Adoption

Adoption is an act of the free grace of God, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of his children, have his name put upon them, the Spirit of his Son given to them, are under his fatherly care and dispensations, admitted to all the liberties of and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow heirs with Christ in glory.

Westminster Larger Catechism, Q74

'To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.'
John 1:12

i) An Amazing Truth

'Adoption is the highest privilege that the gospel offers: higher even than justification... Justification is the *primary* blessing... the *fundamental* blessing, in the sense that everything else in our salvation assumes it and rests on it adoption included... But that is not to say that justification is the *highest* blessing of the gospel. Adoption is higher, because of the richer relationship with God that it involves.'

Jim Packer, *Knowing God*, p231

ii) A Neglected Truth?

Evangelicals have tended to focus on justification because of its *historical* importance and on sanctification because of its *practical* importance. Others have deliberately downplayed the doctrine, thinking it inappropriate or insensitive in an age of widespread family breakdown.

2. The Gift of Sonship

i) In Creation - we are all God's offspring

God himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God and perhaps feel their way towards him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for 'In him we live and move and have our being', as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are indeed his offspring.'

Acts 17:25b-28

ii) In Sin - we are all children of the devil

They said to him... "We have one Father-- even God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him.

John 8:41-44

iii) In Salvation - those who receive Jesus as Lord are adopted back into God's family

To all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 1:12

All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 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!'

Romans 8:14-15

In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith... But when the fulness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Galatians 3:26; 4:4-5

Implication: The double wonder of God's love

God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.

1 John 3:1

4. The Privileges of Sonship

i) The freedom of being a child not a slave

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

Galatians 4:7

Pray then like this: Our Father in heaven...

Matthew 6:9

Jesus said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for you...'

Mark 14:36

Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'

Galatians 4:7

In [Christ Jesus] we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

Ephesians 3:12

ii) The blessing of fatherly discipline

'My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.' It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12:5-11

We often think of 'discipline' as being another word for 'punishment' but that is not its biblical meaning. God's discipline of his children is instead his nurturing, shaping and moulding of us into the likeness of his Son. It is an expression of his love for us rather than of displeasure. When submitted to rightly, it produces righteousness in us rather than bitterness.

iii) The promise of an eternal inheritance

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children then heirs - heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may be glorified with him.

Romans 8:17

a) Now: The downpayment / guarantee of the Spirit

In [Christ] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:13-14

It is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

2 Corinthians 1:21-22

b) Not yet: The full inheritance - a share in Christ's heavenly rule

And not only the creation but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Romans 8:23

The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father.

Revelation 2:26-27

The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

Revelation 3:21

Implications

i) Our adoption into God's family is the basis of Christian conduct

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

1 John 3:1-3

You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

ii) Our adoption into God's family is the basis for our life of faith

Therefore, do not be anxious saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:31-33

iii) Our adoption into God's family is the basis for all our Church relationships

Jesus answered them, 'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of God, he is my brother and sister and mother.'

Mark 3:35

Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity.

1 Timothy 5:1-2

Conclusion

Were I asked to focus the New Testament message in three words, my proposal would be *adoption through propitiation*, and I do not expect ever to meet a richer or more pregnant summary of the gospel than that.

Jim Packer, *Knowing God*, p238

Meanwhile, the immediate message to our hearts of what we have studied ... is surely this: do I, as a Christian, understand myself? Do I know my own real identity? My own real destiny? *I am a child of God. God is my Father; heaven is my home; every day is one day nearer. My Saviour is my brother; every Christian is my brother too.* Say it over and over to yourself first thing in the morning, last thing at night, as you wait for the bus, any time when your mind is free, and ask that you may be enabled to live as one who knows it is all utterly and completely true.

Jim Packer, *Knowing God*, p256