

- I. Session 62: The Love of God Part 4: God' love and the Doctrine of Adoption
- a. Establishing the need: **Do you know how rich is the term "adoption" that's found in the Bible?** Have you realize how important one's parent is in people's lives, whether for good or bad? There's something about knowing about God's work of adopting us as part of our salvation that will impact our lives! Yet so little is written about it. This despite the fact that it is mentioned in the Bible more than regeneration and we talk a lot about regeneration. **So, do you know how rich the doctrine of "adoption" is?**
 - b. Purpose: In this session we shall explore what is the doctrine of adoption with four questions so that we can further appreciate God's work of saving us.
 - i. What does adoption means for the original hearers?
 - ii. Why do we need spiritual adoption?
 - iii. Who has provided our spiritual adoption?
 - iv. How does spiritual adoption change our lives?
 - c. Definition of adoption: "Adoption, as the term clearly implies, is an act of transfer from an alien family into the family of God Himself" (John Murray, Redemption Accomplished and Applied, 134).
 - d. What does adoption means for the original hearers?
 - i. Why study the meaning of the original term in Roman light?
 1. Adoption (υιοθεσία) is mentioned 5 times by Paul (4 in his major epistles) in **Romans 8:14-15, Romans 8:23, Galatians 4:4-6, Ephesians 1:3-14**. It is not mentioned anywhere else in the Old Testament nor early Jewish literature nor the rest of the New Testament (Burke, NSBT, 22). So if one wants to understand the word more besides what Paul has to say in the New Testament, we must look elsewhere.
 2. The Greek term for adoption, υιοθεσία, was a term that was used even before Paul used it, going back as far as the second century BC so it is definitely in the vocabulary of the nonbelievers.
 3. But why specifically interpret it with Roman law understanding? Here are three reasons from Burke, page 62:
 - a. Paul would have been familiar with it since Paul's citizenship was Roman (**Acts 16:37-39, 22:25-29**)
 - b. Paul's epistles talking about adoption were written in letters that were all under Roman rule
 - i. For example Ephesus being the leading Romanized city outside of Rome.
 - ii. Galatians were Romanized regions
 - iii. The most frequent expression of adoption occur in the letter to Rome and obviously Rome would have known about its adoption custom.
 - c. The New Testament were written in the Roman empire and they would have known about Roman custom of adoption since Roman emperors adopted men to be the next rule.

Julius Caesar adopted Octavian in 44 BC who adopted Tiberius who then adopted Gaius and Gaius' uncle Claudius adopted Nero just four years before Paul wrote his letter to church in Rome (Burke, 62).

ii. Adoption—An idea Roman Gentiles and Jews would have understood.

1. What it meant to Roman Gentiles

a. Adoption is a legal action in which you make someone a son to a father other than through biological means.

b. Adoption for adoption varies.

i. Honor and Heritage: Ensure one has kids when one cannot biologically.

ii. Economically: Way of passing wealth and inheritance (which an adoptee would find a great motivation).

iii. Religiously: Ensure that the cult centered on family and ancestor worship continues on.

c. Roman Culture adopted adult kids because there is a greater chance of the person surviving and also the father knows what kind of son he is getting (Burke, 66).

d. Process of adoption:

i. *Protestas* (releasing from family)

ii. *Empacipatio* (formally selling him as a slave)

iii. *Manumitted* (freed from father after being sold three times)

iv. *Adoptio*

2. What it meant to Jewish ears

a. The Old Testament technically did not have discussion about adoption but the Old Testament has a lot to say about sons and heirs.

b. Jews would have understood it since they saw it under the Roman Empire.

e. Why do we need spiritual adoption? (4 Reasons)

Note: I want to make it clear that we don't "need" spiritual adoption in the sense that we are entitled to it. Remember it is always the work of God's grace. Nevertheless, there are reasons why we need spiritual adoption:

i. Before Christ we were by nature sons of disobedience instead of sons of God

1. *"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."* (Ephesians 2:2)

a. **As sons of disobedience what did we formerly walked in?**

Verse 1 mentioned that we were walking dead in sin!

- b. Illustration: Zombies, but that's not really someone you can call your family member anymore! Likewise with being sons of disobedience.
 - 2. While we will look more carefully soon I want to note real quick that **Ephesians 5:6** and **Colossians 3:6** also mentioned "*sons of disobedience*."
 - 3. If God is Holy, being "*sons of disobedience*" that means we cannot be God's sons by nature. Holiness and disobedience are opposites.
 - ii. Before Christ we were by nature sons of disobedience instead of sons of the devil
 - 1. "*and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one;*" (**Matthew 13:38**)
 - a. In context this is Jesus explaining the parable of weeds.
 - b. Jesus here talks about the "*world*" and he divides the whole world up into two camps: "*the sons of the kingdom*" and "*the sons of the evil one*"
 - c. So before Christ that makes us "*the sons of the evil one*"
 - d. If one is a part of "*the sons of the evil one*" that means one isn't part of God's family.
 - 2. "*You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*" (**John 8:44**)
 - a. In the context this is Jesus talking about the Jewish unbelieving religious leaders.
 - b. However given **Matthew 13:38** that shows those apart from Christ are sons of the devil, here we do get some further insight.
 - c. We see here that if "your father is the devil, then "*you want to do the desires of your father.*" Murder and lying are two, to name a few.
 - iii. Being sons of disobedience and sons of the devil is not a good thing for it means being sold into the bondage of sins.
 - 1. "*Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin."*" (**John 8:34**)
 Jesus teaching here is clear: If you commit sins, it shows you are a slave of sin
 - 2. "*For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.*" (**Romans 7:14**)
 - a. Here language of slavery is used with the word "*bondage*"
 - b. Paul states that in the flesh, one is in bondage to "*sin*"
 - c. Here we see the opposite of redemption with the selling of one in the flesh unto slavery to sin.

- iv. If we are sons of disobedience and sons of the devil we deserve God's wrath
 - 1. As sons of disobedience we deserve God's wrath: *"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience."* (Ephesians 5:6)
 - a. For the second time *"the sons of disobedience"* appears in Ephesians.
 - b. Here we learn that *"the sons of disobedience"* will face *"the wrath of God"*
 - c. Paul want the readers to really take this to heart for he said *"Let no one deceive you"*
 - d. Why is God showing His wrath? *"because of these things"* which points back to Ephesians 5:5 which gives us an idea when it says *"For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."*
 - e. The same idea is reinforced in Colossians 3:6 which also mention *"the sons of disobedience"* facing *"the wrath of God."*
 - 2. As sons of the devil we deserve God's wrath: *"39 and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. 40 So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age."* (Matthew 13:39-40)
 - a. Remember earlier we saw Jesus in Matthew 13:38 teaching that the *"the tares are the sons of the evil one."*
 - b. Now in Matthew 13:40 we see that sons of the evil one will face hell at the end of the age.
- f. Who has provided our spiritual adoption? (It's the work of the Trinity!)

Note: To begin with, note that it is all the work of God's grace! Nowhere are we commanded "to be adopted" as all the verbs are indicative showing what God has done.

 - i. God the Father: *"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 [a]Him. In love 5 [b]He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the [c]kind intention of His will,"* (Ephesians 1:3-5)
 - 1. This passage is clearly focus on God the Father as the subject in light of v.3.
 - 2. Notice in verse 5 the Father *"predestined us to adoption as sons"*
 - 3. There can be no adoption without the Father.
 - 4. The Father initiates everything with the Trinity in adopting us.
 - 5. Why adoption? *"In love"* (v.4b)

6. Still, why? *“kind intention of His will”* (v.5)
 7. God the Father predestining us to be adopted would have been shocking to Paul’s readers:
 - a. God the Father have no ulterior motive to adopt us; its more that we need Him instead of Him needing us since he is God! Yet He still adopts us!
 - b. This adoption is done out of love! Not just for one’s own gain!
 - c. Look at **verse 4**. This decision took place *“before the foundation of the world,”* before the elect was ever born which is the very opposite of Roman adopting fathers! God didn’t adopt us because we were good; on the contrary!
- ii. God the Holy Spirit
1. *“Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”* (**Galatians 4:6**)
 - a. Here we see the Spirit entering believers heart which results in believers crying out *“Abba! Father!”*
 - b. *“Abba! Father!”* shows intimacy with God the Father. The phrase is Aramaic and echoes Jesus’ own intimacy with God the Father.
 2. *“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 [a]leading to fear again, but you have received [b]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,”* (**Romans 8:14-16**)
 - a. The Spirit is described in **verse 15** as the *“spirit of adoption.”*
 - b. Again because of the Spirit’s work in believers we can cry out genuinely *“Abba! Father!”*
 - c. Don’t forget the purpose of adoption is to be intimately close and in love with God!
 - d. We also see here that *“The Spirit Himself testifies... we are children of God”* acting as if the Spirit is a witness to the legal agreement of the adoption guaranteeing this is binding. Thus we are not surprise that **Ephesians 1:13** would say *“you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise”*
- iii. Jesus the Son: *“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under [a]the Law, 5 so that He might redeem those who were under [b]the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”* (**Galatians 4:4-5**)
1. We see in **verse 5** the mention of *“the adoption as sons.”*
 2. There’s some epic introduction to great epic. Think of *“A long time ago in a Galaxy far far away...”* We see here an epic introduction of biblical proportion: *“But when the fullness of the time came...”* (v.4)

3. So when the time came what did God do? “*God sent forth His Son, born of a woman...*” (v.4)
4. What’s the purpose? “*so that He might redeem those who were under the Law,*” (v.5)
 - a. Here it might seem like a contradiction: Redeem describes the purchase of a slave. But we must remember the way Roman custom adopted: The original family sold the adoptee legally first as a slave, then is purchased by the adopting father for freedom and then becomes a son.
 - b. But here we see something that would have shocked the readers: What was the cost for the redemption of our adoption??? God’s own Son.

g. Implications:

- i. Do you doubt that you are in God’s family? You were adopted!
- ii. Have you been blown away that adoption has already taken place—and you are now from this point onward to eternity a part of God’s family?
- iii. You no longer fear condemnation as **Romans 8:14** teaches!
- iv. There’s two way to enter any family: Birth and adoption. Scripture talks about us being born again and being adopted. Does that cause you to be in awe of His love?
- v. If you are adopted as Sons of God now have you died to the ways of being children of disobedience?
- vi. If you are adopted as Sons of God have you realized that your new identity in Christ means you have the ability to live for God in holiness? Do you know that it is in your spiritual DNA to be holy?
- vii. Do you realize you have the privilege of being intimate with God? When was the last time you cried out abba, Father?
- viii. Does it astound you with awe that all three members of the Trinity was involved with your adoption?

