

I would like to speak this evening on the subject of **adoption**! It is a beautiful doctrine. It is very surprising that there is so little written on the subject and our Confession of Faith has only **one paragraph** on Adoption!! Adoption is **God** deliberately choosing people who are **unholy** and putting them into His family and making them **heirs** of all creation! They all have **equal rights** with Jesus Christ! Can you believe that? *“has not God **chosen** those who are **poor** in the world to be **rich** in faith and **heirs** of the kingdom, which he has **promised** to those who love him?”* [Jam 2:5] - and in [v17] of our chapter: *“**heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ**”!*

The Bible says God **has chosen** His children from **all classes** and **nationalities** *“before the foundation of the world”*, ie before we were even **born** [Eph 1:4] I am sure that immediately creates certain thoughts in your minds! So, we need to **clarify** some things about God choosing His people. When **we think** of God choosing us **before** we were born, we are inclined to think it was something like the way winners in the **Lottery** are chosen - at **random**! Like numbers out of a hat, we do **not know** which numbers will come up! But that is **not at all like** God's election of His people.

God did **not** choose His people **coldly** or **unintentionally** (as in the Lottery)! Rather God **set His heart on** certain people! *“In love He **predestined us for adoption** through Jesus Christ, according to the **purpose of His will**”* [Eph 1:,5] He **meant** to chose you - it wasn't an **accident**! He **purposed** and **willed** to choose **you**! And it was all to *“the **praise of His glorious grace**”* [Eph 1:4,5] His choice of **you** was so that people would **praise** God for His grace toward you!

God was **pleased** to choose you. God did **not** say ‘What a lucky person you are, your number has come up’! No, God **deliberately** set His **love** on you and was

delighted to do so! He **knew who** He was choosing when He chose **you!** Yes, and God even knew what you **would** be like - your sins, your moods, your habits, your evil tendencies, etc. But amazingly, for all that, He **did** delight in choosing you. Jesus said *“it is your Father’s **good pleasure** to give **you** the kingdom”* [Luke 12:32].

Your adoption is a **gift** from God. God did **not** choose you because you turned out to be holy and beautiful. No, you are holy unto God **because** He chose to **make** you holy. In **no way**, did God choose any of His people because they **were**, or because God **knew** they would turn out to be holy and good people. They were chosen and adopted **to be** holy and righteous and obedient people. God chose His people **in order** that they would not only be holy but also to **glorify God**. *“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you...because God chose you...to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth”* [1 Thes 2:13]

But **why** He did so, why He chose **you** and not someone else instead, will always remain a **mystery** - probably throughout all eternity! **Why** God chose **any** of His people is the **mystery of mysteries!** It is, and **ever shall be**, the greatest **example** of **unconditional love!** We hear a lot today in our post-modern culture about loving people unconditionally. Well, here is the **only true** example of unconditional love!

APP So, let us **never** forget the **purpose** of God’s choosing us - it is that we would **acknowledge** His **grace** and sing His **praises!** Three times in 8 verses, Paul states that the **purpose** of God choosing us, is ‘to the praise of **His glory**’ [Eph 1:6,12,14] Peter says it too *“you are a **chosen** race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may **proclaim** the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness”* [1 Pet 2:9]. The whole **purpose** of God choosing us as His people, is that **we** would **honour** and **praise** Him for His **grace** towards us.

*One of the results of ‘belittling’ the doctrine of adoption, is that we develop a **deficient** and **distorted** view of God! We fail to see Him as He really and manifestly is - a **gracious Father!** When we do not see God as a loving Father, we see Him as a **punitive judge!** (Judge He is, but a just and fair judge). But in actual fact the **predominant** attribute in God is not His justice but His **mercy** and **grace!** As we sing the Psalm ‘**Over all** His other works, His **tender mercies** are’ [Met Psa 145:9]

We too often view God as a **stern** Judge more than a **loving** Father. The result of this is that we often have our ‘quiet times’ out of **guilt** and **fear** of failing to worship Him - rather than out of the **prospect** of **enjoying** and **discovering** something more of His love and grace and beauty and majesty! Our quiet times become **legalistic**, so that unless we have spent the ‘allocated’ time **we** have set ourselves, we feel guilty and vulnerable to God’s rebuke! We become **legalistic** in what ought to be the **highlight** of the day - **fellowship** with our heavenly Father!

APP Do you **enjoy** your private times of worship? Or do you rush through them so that you can get on with the ‘**real**’ **business** of the day? I do it far too often! It shows that I am treating God as an **austere** Master on the lookout for any ‘slip-ups’ amongst His employees! The **relationship** between God and His children is **not** Employer/employee, but Father and Son!! Jesus was **not impressed** with the man who said “*I was **afraid** of You, because You are a **severe** Man. You take what You did not deposit, and reap what You did not sow*” [Luke 19:21]. Jesus **rebuked** this man - because he did not see Jesus as the One who came to seeking to recover His wayward children. Do you **long** to have **fellowship** with Jesus?

Story - Thomas Carlyle’s wife! He loved her deeply, but he was so **busy** with his writing and speaking engagements that he often neglected her. She loved him

also. She took ill and died suddenly. After the funeral, Thomas went to her room and looked at her diary. He found these words that she had written about him. ‘Yesterday he spent an hour with me and it was like heaven. I love him so’. On another day she wrote ‘I have listened **all day** to hear his steps in the hall, but now it is late. I guess he will not come today’! Thomas broke down and wept at how he had neglected just to come and talk with her and what **joy** it brought her. **APP** Friends, that is how Jesus often feels about you/I! **He** wants to come and talk with us - but we are **too busy!** Yes, with **legitimate** duties too! Jesus really would like to have fellowship with us. *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me”* [Rev 3:20] That was said to the **Church** - an invitation for fellowship. **Fellowship** is what **tomorrow** is all about - Christ inviting us to His table - for **fellowship**. Christ is really present!

*We need to realise that God has **not** given us *“a spirit of **slavery** to fall back into **fear**”* rather He **has given us** *“the spirit of **adoption** as sons”* [15]. We need to be able to say *“Abba Father”* in fearless love and adoration! Just as there are those today, for whom the word ‘father’ has **awful** connotations of **abuse** and **brutality** and have never experienced the love of a true father, and who need to **learn** what true fatherhood really is, so there are **spiritual** children who have need to **learn** about the real loving nature of their heavenly Father.

*We need to **draw near**, as the Shorter Catechism says, in **full confidence** and **not** in fear. ‘The preface of the Lord’s prayer (which is, Our Father which art in heaven) teaches us to **draw near to God** with all holy reverence **and confidence**, as children to a **father**, able and **ready to help** us’ [Shor Cat Ans 100]. It is a beautiful verse that Isaiah uses to **encourage** backsliding Israel to return to God *“Therefore the*

Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore He exalts Himself to show mercy to you” [Isa 30:18]. What a lovely invitation! So, we are too often in the Courtroom before God the Judge, and not enough at the **fireside** with our Father to receive His love. Yes, God **will** judge us when we do wrong - but it is **only** for our good! He does **not** want us to **destroy ourselves** - which we **would** do, if left to ourselves!

*Tomorrow is about drawing near to God and accepting His invitation to dine with Him. God is **waiting to be gracious** to you at His table tomorrow!

*What is it to have the ‘*Spirit of adoption*’? It is to have a **sense of belonging!** We live in an age when many people feel **alienated!** There is something wrong if a Christian feels alienated. Having the Spirit of adoption is to have the **assurance** of the Father’s love. Having the Spirit of adoption means God is the **refuge to which he can turn** at any time and in any place. The refuge to which I may always **resort!**

It is **particularly** in times of **trouble** that God is the One to whom we take refuge. The Psalmist said, “*God is my refuge and strength*” - even although the earth shifted and was moved into the sea. “*A very present help in trouble*” [Psa 46]. “*The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble*” [Psa 9:9]. Christians are those “*who have fled for refuge...to the hope set before them*” [He6:18]

Having the Spirit of adoption is **believing** - its believing that God **has** adopted us and we are **safe** in **His** hands! We are **not afraid!** The closest friend Jesus ever had said this: “*There is no fear in love. Perfect love casts out fear*” [1 John 4:18] - and that will mean having **comfort** at the thought of God’s **protection** and **care!** I know these are **subjective** qualities but Christianity must **touch** and **affect** the **heart**, or it is not genuine! We have to **love** the Lord with all our **heart** as well as all our mind! God’s love to us is **not cold** love - **neither** must our love to Him, be cold!

So, a true father must **protect** his family. And God protects His family! God **promises** protection in His Word. Regarding the **arrows** of the enemy, *“a thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it **will not** come **near you**...no evil shall be **allowed** to befall you, no plague come near your tent...I will deliver him; I will **protect** him”* [Psa 91:7,10,14]. And **why** will no arrow or plague not come near God’s people? Because He has **ordered** it so - to protect you.

I finish with a **Story** about **Abraham Lincoln**. He bought a slave girl with the **single** intention of setting her completely ‘free’. She had **no idea** that that was his purpose in buying her. She thought she was just going to serve a new master. After paying the price, Lincoln received the **official legal documents**. He took these documents as proof that he had bought her freedom, and said to the girl and said “You are **free**. You are **free**”. She did not understand. But as he kept repeating it, she said “Am I really free to go anywhere and do anything I want to do?” “Yes”, Lincoln replied, “indeed you are free to go and to do whatever you want”. The girl said “Sir, then I want to **stay with you** and **gladly serve you** all the days of my life”. She was saying in effect ‘You are the Master I was always wanting. I **want** to serve under **your** lordship. There is nowhere better and safer where I could be!’

The **good news** for us tonight is this: Jesus Christ **has procured** all the necessary documents to **prove** that He has **legally purchased** the freedom and salvation of every person who **wants** to serve under Him! And if you have come to accept that ‘freedom’ - He awaits to dine with you at His table tomorrow!