

David W. Long, Pastor
Reformed Presbyterian Church
Lord's Day Morning
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'Doctrines That Will Change Your Life' Series
#5

“Adoption!
The Sweet Reality of Belonging”
Romans 8:1-17

Introduction

Back a few years ago, one of the favorite fund raising techniques of humanitarian groups working overseas was to invite people to adopt a child. You could then give money toward that child and his family, write letters to him, etc. And as effective as that technique may have been in soliciting funds, it was off course, not real adoption.

We learned the difference when David and Karen Carr got on plane and flew to China. In China, they went through all of the legal work necessary for a real adoption. And when they were finished that got back on a plane, this time with a little boy by their side. Not just any little boy, but a little boy who was now their son. He had a new name – their name, Matthew Carr – and he was beginning a new life. The old was being left behind and a new life had started. And he had a new future – new promise and new hope. That's what adoption always promises.

This is our theme today. Adoption. When we become a Christian we are legally and relationally brought into the family of God. We begin to experience and understand the sweet reality of belonging to God. Last week we looked at justification. Justification takes away our sin. Because of our justification we are then adopted by

God. It's this adoption that opens the door to intimacy with God and a vitality that is at the heart of true Christianity.

[Romans 8:1-17]

What is adoption? The Shorter Catechism defines it as *an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.*

In this preaching series, we've been seeing a logical unfolding of several doctrines that help us understand life. We started with the doctrine of God, learning the absolute sovereignty of God. He controls every detail of life. We then studied the doctrine of man seeing that since the fall, man's sin is as bad as it gets. We have no natural goodness or ability to please God. Sin has killed us. But last week we saw the practical implications of justification. God's mercy is more than big enough to overcome our sin. And so that brings us to this place today where we find that God's plan is so beautiful that we not only can be forgiven, but we can enter into a joyful new life in God's family.

The so *what* of the doctrine of adoption is one of the riches and warmest of all of our studies. In one sense we could argue that receiving a pardon would be enough. To know that we are free from sin is great news. Think about a man freed from prison by a pardon from the governor: he is let out of prison, perhaps with no place to go, no friends to welcome him and no resources to start over. A clean record, but a scary life. When we are pardoned by God, we are brought out of prison into the glorious riches of His home and family – not as visitor, but as a son. We are picked up at the gate. We are escorted to a grand welcome. We are

received with love. We are given the riches of every spiritual blessing in heaven. We meet our new family. This is our adoption. So let's look at the particulars. What are the blessings and privileges of being adopted?

I. A New Name

In our justification we are given a new start. Our nature is dealt with. Our sin is removed and we receive the righteousness of Christ. With that new nature comes a new name and a new legal right. *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.* Because we believe in His name, we are given the rights to His name. I John 3:1-2 says *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,*

You see, not only do we have the right **to be** a child of God, this is to be our identity; we also are **called** children of God. The idea behind a name is an identity. Names are to reflect that identity. Carrying the name of God brings with it responsibility.

Before Beth Moore was a Moore she was a Mauser. And before Beth was here in Lafayette here brother David was here as a student. Jenny and I can remember the night David was at our home and about to leave. I said *Be careful*. He replied by saying that growing up in his home whenever he would get ready to leave for an evening his parents would say to him, not *be careful*, but rather these words. *Remember, you're a Mauser!* The point was he where ever he went that

night and whatever he did, he was representing his identity and the family to which he belonged.

There's a good lesson for us in that. As Christians we have the name of Christ. We are the sons and daughters of God. It is a privilege to be a part of His family. Where ever you go and whatever you do you are representing the family of God.

The second privilege of being adopted is:

II. A New Relationship.

The word adoption is not used very often in the Bible. It's not used at all in the Old Testament (although the concept is clearly there) and it's only used a five times in the New Testament. But one of the interesting things about the times Paul uses the Word, he always associates the idea with the Holy Spirit.

Here in Romans 8 there's a lot about the Holy Spirit. And the strong connection between our adoption and the Spirit living in us is made in verses 14-16 (read). In Ephesians 1 we learn that we are *predestined to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ . . . and sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.*

In Galatians 4 we read that God redeemed us *that we might receive the adoption as sons.* And then he adds *Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"*

So what is the point of this? Our relationship to the Father is through the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Whereas our justification deals with our spiritual condition, our adoption deals with our relationship with God. And there are some amazingly significant aspects to our relationship with God because we are now His children.

1. We can know the nearness of God.

Jesus taught us to pray *our Father who art in heaven*. How can we possibly presume to call God our Father? Romans 8:15 says because the Holy Spirit assures us of our adoption, includes us in the family, welcomes us and makes us at home with God, so that the longing of our heart is to call Him, *Abba! Father!* If you compare Romans 8:15 with Galatians 4:6 you'll notice a subtle difference. In our passage here, we are enabled to cry out Abba, Father. But we do the crying or praying. Galatians 4:6 says *Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"* In the second passage it's actually the Holy Spirit who is crying out to the Father.

We need to understand that because we are children of God, there is a new longing to be near God. And with that longing, we have the Holy Spirit to direct our praying and our living. The earlier verses of Romans 8 – esp. verse 9-14 show us that the same Spirit who inclines us to God also gives us the power to live in victory over sin.

2. Love/Acceptance/Assurance

What does it mean to be part of a family? It means we are loved. It means we belong. In a good family there is no fear. Part of what the Holy Spirit does is give us assurance of our salvation.

We aren't going to spend a lot of time on assurance of salvation this morning other than to say that one of the great gifts available to you as a Christian is an assurance that God loves you, has forgiven you and that you will spend eternity with Him. Assurance of salvation is a byproduct of your adoption.

So this new relationship means you have intimacy with God; you have assurance of His love and your salvation, and next,

3. Discipline

Sin is still an issue. Now that you are a child of God you can count on being disciplined. Not a lot of fun, you may think. But before you groan, remember that discipline is a sign of love. Let me just read to you Hebrews 12:7-11.

7 It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?

8 But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.

9 Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?

10 For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness.

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.

And listen; understand that the backdrop of God's discipline is His love and mercy. God will forgive you of your sins. But if you are His child, He will not sit idly by and allow you to walk down the path of destruction.

4. God's Goodness.

Quickly, we need to acknowledge that with this new relationship comes many manifold blessings from God. As your Father he will protect you and provide you and care for you. Listen to Matthew 7:9-11.

9 "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone?

10 "Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake,

will he?

11 *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!*

So, here’s what we’ve seen. If you have been adopted by God because you have believed in Jesus Christ

- You have a new name.
- You have a new relationship that brings you
 - Intimate fellowship with God
 - Love and assurance
 - Discipline
 - God’s Care

One more thing:

III. A New Future

Look at Romans 8:17 (read) and 8:23 (read).

Not only have you been adopted now, there is a fullness to your adoption that is yet to come.

Because you are child of God, the same Holy Spirit that inclines you to fellowship with God also seals you with unbreakable protection for heaven.

Ephesians 1 - 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, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.

Because you are a child of God, you are in line for an inheritance from God. What awaits you is perfection, freedom, full unabated joy, the tree of life, unhindered worship, and blessings beyond what you can even imagine.

We didn’t read all of Romans 8, but I want to go to the end of the chapter to end this morning.

Who can separate you from this love of Christ?
Here's how Paul ends.

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If you are a Christian, you are child of God. There is no greater gift that you have than the sweet reality of belonging to His family.