

Fundamentals, Study 12: Adoption (Rom 8:14-17)

by BS Poh

o The doctrine of adoption is precious to the Christian, but insufficiently taught in churches.

1. A person who is truly converted (i.e. changed by the Holy Spirit to trust in Christ) will not only be justified by God but also be adopted as His son or daughter.¹ *Adoption* is the transfer of one's relationship in one family into another. Before conversion, we live in spiritual darkness, under the power of Satan. We are also under God's wrath (or holy anger) because of our sins against Him.² When converted, we are transferred into the kingdom of God and enjoy all the freedom and privileges of the children of God. God our Judge not only declares us no more guilty, but takes us to be His children!³ (1. John 1:12; Gal 4:4-5; 2. John 8:44; Eph. 2:1-2; 3. Eph 5:8; Col 1:13)

2. Like justification, our adoption into the family of God is legal in nature. God's name is regarded as written on us and we receive the Holy Spirit who is the seal, or guarantee, of our salvation.⁴ A document that is legally sealed (or stamped) is binding. The adopted child cannot be deprived of his rights and privileges. So also, nothing can cut us off from God's love, or take away our rights and privileges as God's children.⁵ (4. Eph 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor 1:22; 5. Rev 3:12; Rom 8:15, 38-39; Heb 13:5)

3. One great privilege is that we may draw near to God boldly and call Him "Father".⁶ Indeed, this is a sign that we have become true Christians - the ability to call upon God sincerely from our heart, "Father!" The sonship that belongs to believers must not be confused with the unique sonship of Jesus Christ.⁷ Christ's sonship is due to eternal generation by the Father. Our sonship is due to a change in our status, at God's appointed time. Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, we are adopted sons of God. Nevertheless, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is also our God and Father. We share the same God and Father, Christ is now our elder brother, and we have become joint-heirs with Christ.⁸ (6. Gal 4:6; Eph 2:18; 7. John 1:14; 2 Cor 6:17-18; 8. John 20:17; Mark 3:34-35; Rom 8:17)

4. God takes special care of His children - protecting them, providing for them, chastening them when they sin against Him, and ensuring that they arrive safely in heaven.⁹ This does not mean that we should become lazy or careless. Rather, we are to work hard, and take all necessary precautions to preserve and protect ourselves, while praying to, and trusting in, God. As the children of God we have the duty to live a holy life, in obedience to His word.¹⁰ (9. Prov. 14:26; Zech. 2:8; Matt. 7:11; Heb. 12:6; John 10:28; 10. Heb. 1:14; Rom. 8:12-14; 1 Pet. 1:13-17.)

5. We reject the idea that God is the Father of all men, which is often expressed as "the fatherhood of God" and "the brotherhood of men." It is true that God is the Creator of all, and He causes His blessings to be enjoyed by all (e.g. sunshine, rain, civil government).¹¹ However, since the fall of man, the relationship between God and man can no longer be likened to that of father and son.¹² From the Bible's point of view, the terms "father," "son," and "brother" belong to the intimate

family relationship of those who are in Christ.¹³ (11. Acts 17:26-29; 12. Matt 5:45; John 8:42-45; 13. 1 John 3:1-2, 10; John 20:17; Mark 3:34-35)

= What a great privilege to be adopted by God! Come to Christ in faith!

Review Questions

1. What is adoption?
2. What are we like before conversion?
3. What happens to us after conversion?
4. State the two things we receive when we are adopted by God.
5. What is one great privilege we have when adopted?
6. What is the difference between Christ's sonship and our sonship?
7. What is our relationship to Christ when we are converted?
8. How does God take special care of His children?
9. What is our duty as the children of God?
10. Why do we reject the idea that God is the Father of all men?

Assignment/Discussion

How would the doctrine of adoption help Christian families when they adopt other children?

Memory Passage (Rom 8:15-17)

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.

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