



Sermon Growth Guide

October 8, 2023

Adoption

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Lead Me Home - Adoption

Romans 8:14-25

Key Verse: Romans 8:15

The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Big Idea: You are adopted into the family of God.



Foundations

This week we consider the incredible significance of what it means for us to be born into the family of God.

The world would have us believe that who we are is solely defined by where we come from combined with the successes and failures we encounter. Any sense of significance or worth is to be found in the name we make for ourselves. However, the concept of being adopted into God's family speaks of a different, truer reality: Our story is embedded into God's story. Thanks to Christ—we have been welcomed into the Father's family!

Adoption illustrates the depth of God's love and the extent to which He desires a close, personal relationship with us. The world continues to scream the message: "You belong to me!" But the Holy Spirit, which "brought about our adoption to sonship," is constantly whispering the truth: "You belong to God!"

As those who live among a creation that groans for the redemption and restoration of all things, we face suffering that manifests itself in various forms. Nevertheless, the encouragement from our passage this week is clear. We can persevere and endure into the future, knowing indescribable glory awaits all who have been adopted into the family of God.

Understanding God's Word

Take a look at verse 14. Who are those considered to be children of God? Take a look at verses 15-17. What does our adoption as God's children make us? What do we share in? Why would this have been significant to the Roman church? Why is this significant to us?

Applying God's Word

In his sermon, Tim said that our adoption in Christ is "complete and final, total and irrevocable." In view of verse 17, discuss how this gives assurance as we face our own sinfulness? Suffering? Even death?

Witnessing God's Word

Who is someone that needs a reminder of their connection to the family of God? Pray for them today and consider how you might encourage them with the truth. Also consider—sometimes the hardest ones to witness to are ourselves. Go look in the mirror and declare to yourself, "I am a child of God!"

This is the great story. How do you understand the world? What is your worldview? We believe in this great story of salvation. Creation—God made this world as a home. Fall—our disobedience ruptured our relationship with God and caused the world to spin into a twisted shadow of its true self. Now we know there is Redemption in Jesus Christ. God sent His Son Jesus to be the way, the truth and the life. And eventually we will understand the hope we have in Consummation—God is going to put all things right in the end. We want to be a part of that. How can I be a part of that? How do I participate in the renewal of all things, the fixing of all that is broken? It's more than doing good or being nice. It is a full change, a complete conversion. The Bible says it starts with **Adoption**.

What is wrong is being put right. Starting from the resurrection of Jesus, the broken twist of the curse is being steadily undone. This is Samwise Gamgee at the end of J. R. R. Tolkien's, *The Return of the King*. Everything kind of blew up, but there he was, and there was Gandalf the wizard: "Gandalf! I thought you were dead! But then I thought I was dead myself. Is everything sad going to come untrue? What's happened to the world?' 'A great Shadow has departed,' said Gandalf, and then he laughed and the sound was like music, or like water in a parched land." Will everything sad come untrue? Will everything wrong be put right?

Jesus has come. He is the way, the truth and the life. Jesus has died for us, for our sins, on the cross. Jesus has risen from the dead. If death can be undone, so can every other wrong thing. He is the way home. Now he puts us on the way. Redemption means we have been purchased. The cost was Jesus' sacrifice, and the purchase is new life, resurrection life, the inauguration of the Kingdom of God. I want to be a part of that. How can I? Do I start doing more good? Do I start being nice? Do I eat more vegetables and use less single-use

plastics? What do I do? Well, I won't push you off any of those in your desire to participate in Jesus' renewal of all things. But that's not how it starts. That's not how you enter in. To enter in, to be a part of it, it takes giving your old life to Jesus and receiving your new life from Him. It takes laying yourself down before Him and letting Him pick you up again. It means dying to self and living to Christ. Jesus called it being born again from above.

Jesus said you have to pick up your cross and follow Him. Elsewhere Paul said it was like following Jesus to the cross: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Galatians 2:20) In our passage, Paul compares it to adoption—adoption initiated by God and activated by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'" (Romans 8:14-15) Adoption to sonship. That's right, "sonship." Half of you are saying, "But I don't want to be a son; I'm a girl." Well, I don't know if I want to be the Bride of Christ either. These aren't about gender; they are about rights, provisions and protections. "Sonship" is right. That's not just a sexist translation. Sonship means you have the rights of the heir, the primary right of inheritance. "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs— heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." (Romans 8:16-17)

I think adoption must be terrifying. It is difficult to imagine walking into a new home as a boy or girl on the first day when you learn this is your new family. This is your new dad. This is your new

mom. This is your brother and your sister. Maybe you even are given a new name. Your new name is... For many families, depending on the age, it may take months or years before the child calls the adopting parents Mom or Dad. When you are adopted into the Family of God, when you are named a brother or sister to Jesus Christ, with God as your Father, the Holy Spirit ministers to your frightened heart. "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." (Romans 8:16) By Him we cry "Abba." The Holy Spirit has a ministry of attestation within you. The Holy Spirit constantly attests to your own spirit, "You are a child of God. You are a child of God." We forget. The Spirit reminds.

That is, when you have been adopted. When you have put your faith in Jesus Christ. When you have given Him your life as He gave His life for you. When you have said, "Yes, Jesus. You are my Savior. I was lost in my sins until you died for me to gain my forgiveness. Yes, Jesus. You are my Lord. I was lost in this world until you showed me the way home, and I will bow my head and bend my knee and humbly follow you. Lord. Savior. I am yours." How do I participate in Redemption, in Consummation, in the renewal of all things broken? It starts with following Jesus and being adopted, once for all, into the family of God. Family is where things change; the crucible where things are formed and reformed. We have all kinds of family histories, all kinds of positives and negatives. You could start a good conversation just by saying, "Family is one of God's greatest gifts."

It is only by the sacrifice of Jesus we get to come in. It's what Jesus came to do. John Calvin wrote, "His task was to restore us to God's grace as to make of the children of men, children of God... Who could have done this had not the selfsame Son of God become the Son of man, and had not he so taken what was ours as to impart what was his to us, and to make what was his by nature ours by grace?" (John Calvin,

Institutes) Jesus took what was ours, sinfulness and guilt, so that we could have what is His, sonship, adoption into eternal life and an eternal inheritance in glory. Martin Luther called it the "happy exchange," a phrase pretty close to what our own Elder Megan Nilsen used for her book, *A Beautiful Exchange*, telling her own stories of adoption and faith in Jesus. I want you to see, this is an event, an exchange, a transaction. Adoption in Christ is complete and final, total and irrevocable. Once you put your faith in Christ, there is no question. You are no longer a lost child. You are a child of God. Once and done, forever and ever, and nothing can take that away.

But do you accept the exchange? Do you give your life? Do you recognize and admit that you are lost without Jesus? When you are adopted in Christ, you enter the door humbly. We don't storm in and plop ourselves down at the table, "I'm here! What's for dinner?" It takes a humble turning. It takes repentance, turning around. I will no longer go that direction. I stop, I turn, I admit my faults and my rebellion and I turn toward Christ. That is how we enter in to this new life. That repentance continues as you learn to live a new way of life. You can't do it the old way anymore. You have a new name now, and you are a new person.

My dad showed me a blog by a recovering addict, Nadia: "In 1994, when I was three years sober, the wheels just sort of fell off. I don't know if 'mental breakdown' is an entirely accurate term for what I experienced, I just know I was losing my ability to make sense to myself. I was in emotional vertigo, like I kept reaching for a light switch and missing... I now know what I did. I spent those first three years of my sobriety attempting to live the exact same life as before I got sober, just without the drugs and alcohol. Why? Because I could not let go of who I had been. I would cop dope for other people and not even take a cut, simply because the idea of being someone who no longer

knew how to score was too terrifying to incorporate into my self-understanding. Yet leading the same life with the same people in the same scene and sleeping around with the same exact kind of people, well, it ends up that is a very painful life to lead... I may have been sober, but I didn't start to get well until I could accept who I had been, who I was becoming and accept any distance there was between the two." New life. A new identity. No more of the old ways. It means walking away from the past, turning around on the road to lost, and turning toward home.

This is not about adding Jesus to an otherwise moderately successful life. No, this is about recognizing your need for salvation. You have to give to gain. You have to go down in order to rise up. You have to humble yourself enough to bow down and enter the door. There is no sin more apt to interrupt all this than the sin of pride, pride that says, "I wasn't lost." Have you ever been lost driving, then you find the way and you turn to Abigail—I mean, your wife, or whoever—and say, "I wasn't lost." Pride will stop the turn. This is repentance, humbling. Not just a new nametag, a new name, a new identity, a new life. Adoption. You can't be that person anymore. I can't be that other person anymore. I am a child of God. When I forget, the Holy Spirit whispers it again in my ear by the ministry of attestation.

When you give your life to Christ, the unfolding begins. Adoption is final, permanent, and irreversible. This is what theologians call justification. Because of what Christ has done to pay the penalty of sin and your faith in Him, you are now justified before God in Christ by faith through grace. You are saved. You are adopted. You are redeemed. Now an unfolding begins of all the wrinkles and twists of the curse of the fall. Just as the fall began with us, so the renewal begins with us, and all creation groans and waits to see it play out. "For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed... We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the

present time." (Romans 8:19, 22) Just as all creation fell and got twisted up because of the disobedience of mankind, now all creation is waiting and watching as God starts to undo the curse starting with our own hearts as the Spirit whispers to our Spirit. You know the way your cat looks at you? The animals have been waiting. The earth has been waiting. Creation has been groaning for things to be put right.

It starts with your adoption in Christ. From that moment, you are no longer a lost nomad; you are a pilgrim headed for home. And that impacts everything around you. The world watches and waits, and it begins to feel the healing of restoration through the power of Christ in you as you walk toward home. This world will not be annihilated but restored. Jesus called it the "renewal of all things" in Matthew 19:28, the *palingenesia*, the born-again-ness of all creation. "Meet me there," He said. It starts with your own born-again-ness. But we are not home yet. We walk out our days down broken and twisted roads until the glory appears. "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18) Along the way do not lose heart. Listen to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit attests. The Holy Spirit is in your ear, in your spirit within you, saying again and again, "Cry out to your Father, Abba! You are a child of God."

So, now you live as a pilgrim on the road headed home. You endure the sufferings and pains of life knowing that your story is part of the great story, God's story. How do you not lose hope? How do you stay in touch with that greater story? You keep your heart open in prayer, you gather regularly with other pilgrims who know the same secret, you open the Bible and hear the words of truth calling you home, and you live in that hanging, waiting, groaning space, but now knowing for sure, for sure, you are a child of God and God is fixing this.