

Fully in the Family Galatians 4:1-7

Introduction

- Today I want to talk about adoption...
 - o Because I think there is a common misconception about adoption, and that is that adopted people are cared for by a family, loved dearly by the family, but are they really part of the family?
 - o And here is what we want to get at, adopted people aren't cared for by a family, they are family!
- And what good news is this for us, why? Someone says, "Well I wasn't adopted into my earthly family." Maybe not, but every single human who comes into God's family comes in through the spirit of adoption...as we will see today, Jesus came that we might receive the adoption
 - o And in that adoption is full admittance into the family, it's a family name, it's a relationship with God, it's a future inheritance...every blessing of God is available through adoption
 - o You could say it like this, "Whatever blessings were available through birth into the family, are available through being adopted into the family..."God's adopted children have the full family blessing
- Illustration: Cinderella. Why is Cinderella such an inspiring story? Well, like any story, it's because of the tension being resolved
 - o And that story builds a particular tension...It's the injustice of favoritism toward the biological daughters in the story...
 - o I think this is why the story is powerful; becoming a princess is one thing, but not being treated like a daughter is another
 - We see the injustice, we know the tragedy, something tells us it's not right, but then sometimes we wonder spiritually, "Is my adoption into the family of God going to be enough?"...with my background, my mess, does He love me like He loves other people...and we need to be convinced today, adoption equals the full blessing of family.
 - And that is going to inform the way we see adoption...Have you ever heard someone wonder if they could love an adopted child like a biological one? Maybe you've wondered...
 - The question itself goes to the heart of the gospel. What do we believe about our relationship with God?...
 - Let's get that right, then adoption will get right...

Scripture

4 I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by

his father. ³In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world.

- Paul is using an analogy here that everyone at the time would have understood, though in our day, it's a little foreign and here it is...
 - o In a wealthy household you have bondservants and sons all running around together, and there is no difference in them until the one is grown enough and comes into the inheritance
 - o The child is no different, until he steps into the inheritance...the father is the owner of all, and he bestows that wealth onto the son, at the time he sets...
 - so the change comes in that marked moment when the father lavishes all to the son
- But before that happens, he is under guardians and managers. He is the heir, and yet they are over him positionally in the household...
 - o Then in verse 3 he says, it is sort of like that with people in the world...before Jesus Christ comes bringing the inheritance, bringing that marked moment in time when the son becomes the heir...
 - o It's hard to tell the children from the servants, those in the house from those outside the house. Why?
 - Because the law that God gave to bind the people's hearts to Him became just another elementary principle of the world...
 - I know that's complicated term but this is the idea, before Jesus Christ, people were held captive by their belief in works righteousness
 - Any religious or philosophical system set in place to make yourself right through your own works and merit.
 - That may be some sort of pagan religious system, with sacrifice, and strange customs, or it may look like the children of Israel using God's law to try and be good enough to be accepted by him¹...
- In either case, what is needed is that marked moment where the true sons step forward for their inheritance, that's when you know who is the family of God or not...
 - o Well, that moment comes in the fullness of time...

⁴But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

- The fullness of time, this is the marked moment...where the son steps forward to receive the inheritance

¹ ZECNT, Schreiner

- o But this is curious because the son is stepping forward, he is sent forward, born of a woman, and under the law to redeem those who are under the law, and adopt other children...
- o In the fullness of time, God brings us into the family through the gospel. That's what this is getting it...Jesus, Son of God, becomes born of a woman, takes on flesh...lives, dies, and is resurrected for us
- And I love what it says that He was born under the law to redeem those under the law...that's us
 - o The law of God was something that we broke at every turn. Jesus was born under it, to live it out perfectly for us...and He did, never sinned one time. While we break the law of God profoundly, Jesus kept it perfectly
 - o He fulfilled it on our behalf so that when we put faith in Him, He could give us his perfect record...
 - That perfect record is what brings us out from under the law, and into full family status. Remember the illustration...not sure who is the servant or the son until the time comes, the gospel is that time...
- And here's a question... Are you living freely in the family of God or are you enslaved to the elementary principles of the world?
 - o There are really only two ways of understanding a relationship with God, religion and the gospel
 - o Religion says, I have to do so many things. Act this way, worship that way, keep these laws, sacrifice these things...
 - o The gospel says, there is only one way to step forward in the inheritance, and that is through putting faith in the gospel, that Jesus not only died and rose, but He lived for you
- And this is the message that has sent the gospel all the way around the world...
 - o The Pax Romana, unparalleled 200 years of peace and prosperity and infrastructure and ideas flowing from the greatest power on earth 2000 years ago
 - o And from that time, the fullness of time...here comes a carpenter, with no wealth, no power, no military might, no governmental authority...He had a band of followers pretty much assembled from the island of misfit toys
 - And they turned the world upside down...How? The scandal of grace. The message to come out from under the law, beckoning the nations to leave the elementary principles, and into the inheritance...into the adoption
 - The message that, as Jerry Bridges said, Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace.

- Family or servants to the principles of works righteousness?
Come forth and step into the invitation for adoption...

5...to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

- And this starts to really take us back to that main idea, that adoption equals full family status, the name, the relationship, the future...
 - o Adoption means to place a son...why doesn't it say daughter? Because in this context, it was the son that received the inheritance. So that's the adoption that is available for us all, full family status, for us all male or female...
 - This is the highest privilege the gospel offers...to be right with the judge is one thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is greater²
- Like any adoption, there was a plan, He executes it. There was a cost, His son, He pays it. And now there is a family being built God's way...
 - o Illustration: When you adopt a child, people have questions and it's a little odd to them...especially if you already have kids
 - o Why didn't you just have more kids biologically? Why do you want more kids anyway? Do you want our kids? It's sort of an odd deal in our world...
 - Most people assume there maybe is some sort of biological issue, but adoption isn't about biology, it's about theology³
 - Could biology play a role? Of course, but for the Christian it's theological first, building families the way God builds His!

⁶And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

- Adoption brings the family name, fully in. And then we are given relationship and a future, that's here
- The relationship comes through the Spirit of God crying out in our hearts...
 - o That's the idea here, God sent the Spirit of the Son, that's the Holy Spirit part of the triune God⁴ and His role is to assure us of our full family status given through adoption...that what the Spirit is doing here
 - o What the Son secures, the spirit assures.⁵ That we are the family of God. That we have intimacy with God. That past and present sins were taken care of on the cross, and God loves us.

² Knowing God, Packer

³ Merida

⁴ 1 Peter 1:11, Acts 16:7

⁵ Begg

- Illustration: There is something about crying and knowing that our father hears us, that assures us we are the children of God...
 - Remember, the relationship trumps the rationale, we understand or we stand under...
- Does it break through to the emotions today to understand, we are not just right before a judge, but we are loved by a Father in heaven...
 - o That despite our sin, despite being born by natural birth into the family, we are the heirs
 - o And we are heirs...of what? What is the inheritance?
 - o A relationship with God, a future in heaven, living under God's sight in a place where everything sad has come untrue...
 - o Illustration: Think about what Paul is doing historically, everyone reading this has seen the adopted son receive the ultimate inheritance, as Julius Caesar adopts Octavius who becomes Caesar Augustus...
 - And is given the keys to the Roman Empire...
 - How incredible to be the beneficiary of Caesar becomes of what he owns, and Paul is saying God owns the whole world...He is supremely powerful and infinitely rich, and He bestows the inheritance upon you
 - I am not an expert in inheritance, but I know this, the value of the inheritance rises only to the level of the one giving it, and in the family...we are the heirs of God Almighty...
 - Let your spirit cry out, let your emotions run, it is good news that we are fully in the family...

Adopt children fully into our family

- We are fully in the family. Name, relationship, future.
 - o There are no Cinderellas in our families, because we are not a Cinderella in God's...the adopted child is cared for by the family, they are family.
- Yet some of us have a hard time with that today...Deep in our hearts, we wrestle with the grace of God
 - o Am I fully in, despite my sin? Am I fully blessed, despite my failures? Does He love me, like He loves everyone else?
 - o And we are wrestling with that because we cannot view adoption the right way. We will think it's a good thing, but is it really family? In our culture, even Christians say..."How can someone love a child like it's their own? Why would someone adopt if they could have their own?"
 - These are not small misunderstandings. They reflect not a misunderstanding of earthly adoption, but a misunderstanding of what God has done for us...
- So what did God do for us? Well, He didn't put us on a trial period...and that's how we think about it.

- o If I do good enough I am in, if not, I am out. Or, even though I am in now, I could be out tomorrow because of my sin...
- o Gospel: Am I really family with God, or am I on a contract? Here is what I want you to see, and this will help us think about adoption. Church, there is no trial period with God's family, because there is nothing to prove.
- o You didn't bring anything worthy to get you in...slave and a son, under the elementary principles of the world, entrance into the family came from what He did for you...
- o The scandal of it, that He would give His only begotten son that whosoever believes on Him...
 - Not works really hard, not proves themselves, but believes...
- Think about it like this: How do I know I am fully in the family despite my sin? Because it wasn't my lack of sin that got me in the family in the first place...
 - o He didn't take you off the street because of your righteousness and he is not putting you back on the street because of your functional unrighteousness...
- There is no halfway with adoption. We live in the age of kinda, kinda dating, kinda between jobs (which has another name), kinda a Christian...
 - o There is no halfway with God's adoption, no kinda
 - o Some are like, "Man our home is a wreck, I am wrapped up in an addiction, anger and pride are manifesting in my life, etc...."
 - And because of that you feel like you are either out, or almost out. Cinderella at least...like in the house but locked away upstairs
 - If you don't understand that God has fully brought you through adoption it will be hard for you to understand Him building families on earth through adoption
 - Christian, you are blessed, favored, forgiven and loved, you are fully adopted...the inheritance is yours, you're in the family. Kids weren't created for orphanages, they were created for families, and so were you⁶...and He's given you one.

Conclusion

- If you aren't a believer...the first application of this sermon is, what do you believe about God as a Father who will bring you fully in?
 - o And I am going to call you to that. Illustration: Kobe Bryant, if there really is no such thing as superman, and it can all be over in the blink of an eye...what are you doing with God's invitation to the ultimate adoption party?
- Adoption draws us, the story of family being created without blood ties...it draws us.

⁶ Merida

- o It's probably drawing you. Why? Evolutionary theory has no answer for this...survival is about the fittest, and yet you and I know there is nothing weaker and more vulnerable than orphan, and yet we know it's right for people to give up their power to bring them in
- o Family being created by something other than blood, it's a real thing but it's not a physical thing, there is transcendence...let that open you to what God wants to do in your life personally
- And for the believer, there is something here for every single person...
- Illustration: William Carey, 1792...preached from Isaiah 54, "Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God."
 - o The next year he was sent to India where he labored for the gospel for the next 40 years...inspired hundreds to follow his footsteps
 - o Andrew Fuller, friend and co-laborer, he didn't go...Instead he stayed behind in support. Carey told Fuller, "I will go down into the pit, if you will hold the rope."⁷
 - We need more people to go down the well, and everyone else to hold the rope...
 - You can do that through giving (Skip Starbucks for the next 6 weeks.)
 - Now is the time, God has been moving in you to do something with stocks, maybe this is it...
 - What can you do to take action or hold the rope? Let's pray.

Sermon by Andrew Hopper, lead pastor of Mercy Hill Church in Greensboro, N.C. Permission has been granted for you to use these teaching materials for sermon preparation, small group Bible studies, personal study, etc.

⁷ <https://www.imb.org/2017/06/28/hold-ropes-plea-pastors-churches/>