

## Praise God For Adoption(s)

Ephesians 1:5-8

God wants you to understand who you are and why you are here. And when you do—you absolutely can never be the same. Most people that would attend a Sunday evening service have a fairly good idea of what the Bible is all about. You know about Creation and the Fall. About God's call to Abraham and the forming of the nation of Israel. That from Israel came a Messiah who would not only save His people from their sins—but became a Savior to *all* who will turn from their sin and trust in Him. You know He is coming again—and you know that when He does—eventually He will make a new heaven and a new earth and we will dwell with Him forever. That is absolutely great stuff. It gives us ultimate hope in a world that has *so little* hope.

But knowing that and truly living in light of that are two different things. Knowing that but not pressing that into your daily thinking and lifestyle is like receiving news that a wealthy relative has placed a jewelry box [**Slide 1**] filled with priceless jewels into a deposit box at a local bank—in *your* name. Along with that news, you receive all the information you need in order to access the box and dispose of its contents in any way that you see fit. You know the box exists—but you never bother to investigate what you have in it—let alone use or liquidate its contents. Instead, every night you stop at a 7/11 on your way home from work and you buy a lottery ticket—dreaming that maybe one day you will be lucky enough to win a jackpot prize. But you *never do*. And so all you have to show for it is a bunch of useless lottery tickets. You say: “I’d never waste my money on the lottery. The odds are stacked against winning!” But if you are living life without the knowledge of all that you have in Christ, if you spend your life trying to find your worth in a career or by gaining the approval of others—all that you will have to show for it is as futile as a pile of out-of-date lottery tickets. Has the Gospel has become too common for you lately? Have the empty hopes of daily pursuits caused you to overlook the wealth you have in Christ? If that is so—then this book is exactly what you need.

Last week, we began to look at many would not consider a jewel, but more of a bitter pill. We looked at election. And the thing we concluded is that for Paul ,it was indeed a jewel rather than a bitter pill—because he understood the absolute necessity of God's *first* choosing us. The conclusion Paul later brings us to in chapter two is this: Until you understand just how much sin has affected mankind, you will fight the doctrine of election as arbitrary and unfair. But once you see that *you* would never even *want* to choose Christ if He had not *first* chosen you in eternity—you like Paul will be in awe of His amazing grace.

Tonight, we want to look at another jewel—the jewel of our *adoption*. If election is *misunderstood*, adoption is practically *ignored*. And yet, this jewel has some incredible blessings and challenges for you if you will respond to its implications for your life.  
**[Pray]**

In a world where too many unborn children never even have the chance to be born and where others are born to parents who are ill-prepared to take care of them—***praise God for adoptions!***

Several families in our church have chosen adoption as a means of raising a new generation for Jesus Christ. When you think about it, that is so awesome. It is awesome because unlike parents who go through the process of naturally bearing children—these parents actually ***choose*** their children. But with that choice—*there is often much sacrifice*.

Let me give you one example. In Russia, many families are so poor that they are either deemed unfit or they are required by the local government to send their children to orphanages to be cared for until they reach adulthood. Just going to one of these orphanages can make you wonder how poor the parents must have been because the facilities themselves are so dreary and the provisions so meager. Every time I or any of the other men from Detroit has flown to Russia, we have flown back on a DC 10 with at least 20 newly adopted children. They call it the “***baby flight***.” It takes about *10 hours* to fly from New York to Moscow—but with 20 crying babies, it seems like *30 hours* coming home. But for the parents—it is the *culmination* of a lengthy and costly process. There are flights back and forth to Russia. There are legal fees, immigration fees, case worker fees, along with hotel and food expenses. And the total amount for all this?? **PRICELESS**. Just ask....[Slide 2]

One of our families—Don and Delphine Warbington, who recently completed the adoption process and now are the proud parents of two precious children from Russia, Jonah and Marina. What love! What sacrifice! What joy!

So I say: ***Praise God for adoptions***. But as wonderful as that is—as exciting as it is for us to share with the Warbingtons and other Cornerstone families who *have* or who *will* go through the adoption process—it really is just a taste of something even greater that ***every*** believer experiences. **[Read together Ephesians 1:5-8]:**

*5 he predestined us to be **adopted** as **his sons** through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace 8 that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.*

J.I. Packer wrote: “*Adoption is the highest privilege that the gospel offers: higher than even justification.*” That is an incredible statement. And yet if you were to take a poll among professing believers about what makes being a Christian such a desirable thing—what answers do you suppose would dominate the poll? Being saved from sin? going to heaven? not going to hell? answered prayer? fellowship with other believers etc. And all those things are true and good. But they are in large measure attributable to what God has done for us in adopting us. Yet how far down the poll would it take before you would finally get the answer: “We have been adopted into God’s family?” And so Paul says: ***Let’s Praise God for adoption!***

*In the minutes that remain, I want to trace this doctrine starting from this verse and on to its implications later on in the book of Ephesians so that when you leave here tonight—you can leave with a greater appreciation for this incredibly precious jewel along with a passion to make it sparkle in your life to the praise of His glorious grace.*

**Transition:** There are two simple but powerful truths connected with this word. Adoption is a *comfort*. Adoption is a *call*. First of all...

I. Adoption is a ***comfort*** to you.

Just as we did last week, we need to jump ahead to chapter two and Paul's reminder of what we were before adoption took place. Look again at **2:1-3**:

*1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in **those who are disobedient**. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and **following its desires** and thoughts. Like the rest, **we were by nature objects of wrath**.*

As much as I like the NIV, this is one of those places where I wish they would have left the text alone. If you have a more literal translation, notice it says instead of "those who are disobedient": "**sons of disobedience**." And instead of "objects of wrath", it says: "**children of wrath**."

Paul is actually using a Hebrew way of expressing how our lives were completely characterized by disobedience and therefore were worthy of God's judgment. Far from being children who belonged *to God*, we were children who *belonged to sin*. This is further underscored by the phrase—**by nature**. Contrary to popular opinion, we are not born morally innocent—but with an unmistakable bent toward our own fallen, evil desires. But the bent is there because of an even deeper problem—we are members of a fallen race. This is what Jesus was saying to the religious leaders of His day in John 8:44:

*44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*

Their problem was that they thought they were okay. They thought that by being born into Abraham's family—they were automatically part of God's family. Jesus stuns them by pointing out that they (and the rest of us) are Satan's offspring—inasmuch as everyone in Adam has fallen into sin. And left to ourselves, we would have freely chosen to remain in that condition and eventually face God's eternal wrath.

The Bible geographically refers to this wrath as a place called "hell". And many conceive of hell as completely removed from God's presence. But is that really so? Is there any place where God is entirely absent? That is

*impossible* for an Omni-Present God. What makes hell the opposite of heaven is that in heaven, God's people will live forever in the presence and knowledge of God's total satisfaction with them; whereas, in hell sinners will exist forever in the presence and knowledge of his *unrelenting disapproval!*

*So where is the jewel?* Ephesians 1:5 tells us that God has a different outcome for *His* children. He reminds believers of all ages that God predestined people who used to be “*sons of disobedience*” and “*children of wrath*” to be **adopted** as His sons **through Jesus Christ**. We move from condemnation to acceptance because God loves His Son—and thus loves those who are in His Son. This is where we can take a closer look at the statement I made earlier from Dr. J.I. Packer. You remember that Packer said that adoption is an even higher privilege than justification. How could that be? In justification, condemned sinners are declared righteous. But in adoption, those same sinners **are given all the rights and privileges of a natural born child**. Justification is about our **standing** with before an infinitely holy judge. Adoption is about our **relationship** with Him as our *Father*. Justification means that the *Judge of all the Earth* will not hunt us down and finally condemn us in the end. Adoption means that we can go today and crawl into his lap and call Him, Abba or “Daddy.”

But how does adoption work? When does it happen? Sitting here tonight, you may not feel too *adopted* right now. In fact, depending on how this week went and how you responded, you may be wondering whose family you really belong to. Like justification, adoption is a reality whether we feel it or not. It is a reality determined by what God has done for us through the cross work of Jesus Christ (Read verse 7: “***In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace***”).

But it does not stop there. This jewel of God's grace invites you to approach your heavenly Father—not because you have had a good day and feel like He just might be in a mood to talk to you—but because you know your need and you know His love to be *unfailing* and His grace to you to be *greater than all your sin*. You would never come to that conclusion alone and so He gives you a Spirit of adoption that testifies to your spirit concerning the truth of these promises. Paul tells us as much in Romans 8:15-16: ***15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.***

But there is even more. Bob pointed out this morning that there is this already/not yet distinction that we saw illustrated in the Church at Corinth. On one hand, Paul calls them sanctified (which he uses to describe their position). On the other hand, he is going to be calling on them to “get with it” in their daily living out of sanctification. Already/not yet. The same is true with adoption. We are adopted. We have all the rights and privileges of Sonship by virtue of being in Christ—our elder brother. But all too often we hardly look like our elder brother.

**Transition:** And so we are reminded that with the *comfort* of adoption, there comes a call.

II. Adoption is a *call* to you.

It is a call based on the *comfort* of adoption. Remember, the comfort of adoption says in essence: God accepts you not because you *are* okay—but because you are fundamentally **un-okay!** But the adoption that accepts you through Christ will not leave you there. It *calls* you to *where you need to be*.

There is an easy way to remember this: 1:5/5:1 **[Read]** By the way (and this is just the way it happened to work out when Robert Stephanus in the 16<sup>th</sup> century divided the Bible into smaller units which we now refer to as “verses”), the same works out with 1:4 and 4:1! Anything less than this will turn grace into something wimpy and directionless. Whereas, God’s all of God’s grace—including His adopting grace is given to move us to CHANGE.

So what is the call of adoption? In what way should the comfort of adoption call us to CHANGE? According to Eph. 5:1-2, the comfort of adoption calls you and me to live out God’s kind of love before a watching world. To love as we have been loved. Now don’t start flying on auto-pilot because you have heard all this before. Knowing this and doing it are two entirely different things. But both are part of the jewel.

This is a great topic to be thinking about the day before Valentines Day—isn’t it? I mean—the world is *so confused* about love. They think of it almost entirely in terms of romance, mutual attraction—and mostly touchy feely stuff. Not that there is anything wrong with touchy feely stuff. In fact, I happened to like it myself. It’s just that it won’t go *very far* in a sin-cursed world. Certainly not as far as God intends to take you. “Touchy feely” stuff may work on Valentine’s Day—when you take that special person out for a nice meal. But even that can be very vulnerable. So you go out to eat—and 3 million other people have the same idea tomorrow night. All of a sudden the romance can quickly begin to lose its edge.

But God’s kind of love—the love he calls you and me to—goes so far beyond romance or even the 29 character traits of compatibility advertised on e-Harmony dot.com. It is patient enough to deal with crowded restaurants and traffic jams. But it is also long-suffering enough to handle being sinned against without seeking withdrawal or revenge. It is a very robust type of love. It is a love that first of all has considered the love of the Lord Jesus and is dazzled by it and in awe of it. It is a love that causes us not only to love Him who loved us—but it moves us to love as He has loved us. Look at 2 Cor. 5:14-15:

*14 For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

When we fall in love with *His* love—God’s Spirit will move us to display it to each other and to those around us who desperately need to understand God’s love.

Can you think of any passages that teach us how to love like Christ? All over the NT. But the one that really jumps out because of its directness is Matthew 5:43-48: [Slide 3]

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be *sons* of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

What is the distinguishing characteristic that marks us as God’s adopted sons and daughters? Loving those who do not love us! That is the call of adoption—to love others as our elder brother has loved us!

**Illustration:** Man who had a mean, insulting female supervisor who gave much thought to how to show love and kindness. Set out to do what Romans 12:19-21 describes as a “love offensive”. He did not do anything spectacular. Just simple things: Like saying hello. Or when he would go to copy machine or coffee machine, he would ask: “Can I get anything for you.” A month later, she came to him in tears. She was broken for what she had done. And that lady could no longer point the finger at him—due to the climate of grace that God brought into her life through this man’s love.

The comfort of adoption—that God has adopted undeserving sinners like us into His family.

The call of adoption—to become like His Beloved Son.

**Illustration:** It Takes A Church, p. 27. Which one of you is my daughter—and which one of you is my Lord?

What a *treasure* we have in adoption!