

Digging Deep: Exploring the Joy of Systematic Theology

Class 27: The Doctrine of Salvation, part 7

Adoption

“... this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

John 17. 3

I. A Brief Recap



II. Defining “Adoption”

The gospel can be thought of as “adoption through propitiation.”

I do not ever expect to find a richer or more pregnant summary of the good news than that.

JI Packer, Knowing God

Adoption = 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. (WSC, 34)

As Scripture affirms, forgiven sinners do not enter Christ’s kingdom as paupers. We become royal sons, members of the family of God, siblings of the King of kings—brothers of whom he is not ashamed (Heb. 2.11). Biblical motifs for salvation are not left in the cosmic courtroom, but ... boldly & intimately proceed into the home & fatherly heart of God. God is not exclusively Judge; he is a gracious Father. The believer stands not merely as an acquitted criminal, but as an adopted son.

David Garner, The Riches & Reach of Adoption in Christ

III. The Glory of Adoption

A. Ephesians 1. 3-6

*Blessed be the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for **adoption** to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*

B. Romans 9. 1-5

*I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit—² that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.⁴ They are Israelites, and to them belong the **adoption**, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.*

C. Galatians 4. 5-6

*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive **adoption** as sons.⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”*

D. Romans 8. 14-16

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of **adoption** as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God ...*

E. Romans 8. 22-24

*For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.²³ And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for **adoption** as sons, the redemption of our bodies.²⁴ For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees?*

.....

Roman imperial adoption ... provides the first century context for Paul’s use of the term. Adoption, as practiced by Roman emperors, ensured the perpetuation of the dynasty. Convinced his biological offspring offered poor options for his replacement, the emperor would choose an adult son outside his immediate offspring as successor to throne. The emperor chose this successor-son based upon his demonstrated excellence, marked character, and proven dependability. Adopted by the emperor, this already proven adult son inherited the entire kingdom and was appointed to rule over it.