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## SESSION 4 | ADOPTION: MEMBERSHIP IN THE FAMILY OF GOD

### I. Introduction

- **Definition:**
  - “In regeneration God gives us new spiritual life within. In justification God gives us right legal standing before him. But in adoption God makes us members of his family. Therefore, the biblical teaching on adoption focuses much more on the personal relationships that salvation gives us with God and with his people.” (Systematic Theology, Grudem, p. 736)
  - “All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have His name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him as by a Father: yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.” (Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 12)
- **The Importance of Understanding Adoption**
  - “If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this

is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.”  
(Knowing God, J.I. Packer, p. 182)

- “To claim to be a son of daughter of God is a higher word than if a man could deduce his genealogy from an uninterrupted line of a thousand kings and princes. There is more honor, true honor, in it.” Hugh Binning
  
- Regeneration makes us partakers of the divine nature; adoption makes us partakers of the divine affections. Joel R. Beeke, *Heirs with Christ: The Puritans on Adoption*, 27
  
- **The Difficulties of Understanding Adoption**
  - The Problem of Bad Fathers and The Problem of Good Fathers
  
  - The Problem of Human Adoption and The Good of Human Adoption
    - Samuel Willard, *Three Ways Divine Adoption Is Different Than Human Adoption, A Complete Body of Divinity*, 483-84
      1. God has no need of an heir because he lives forever.
  
      2. God irreversibly makes us his heirs.
  
      3. God chooses his children, not based on anything in them, but based solely out free grace.

## II. Adoption: What It Is

- **Adoption is Accomplished By God**
  
- **Adoption is Covenantal.**
  - A New Family.
    - John Owen, Five Elements of Adoption (Ferguson, *John Owen on The Christian Life*, 90-91)
      1. that the person first belongs to another family
      2. that there is a family to which he has no right to belong
      3. that there is an authoritative legal translation from one family to another
      4. that the adopted person is freed from all the legal obligations of the family from which he came<sup>5</sup>) that by virtue of his translation he is invested with all the rights, privileges, and advantages of the new family.
  - Our Old Family.
    1. We were sinful in lifestyle and inclinations (1 Peter 1:18)
    2. We were children of wrath (Ephesians 2:3)

3. We were children of The Law (Galatians 4:24-28)

4. We were Children of the devil (1 John 3:10)

- “He doth not adopt us because we were lovely, but that we might be so God saw as much beauty in us as in others, and that there was none at all. And hence, that yet he should adopt us is a demonstration of his unconceivable grace.” Samuel Willard, *A Body of Complete Divinity*, 486

- Our New Family: Adoption and the Abraham Story (Romans 9:7-8)

- Our New Family: Adoption and the Jesus Story (Matthew 3:17; John 17:23)

- A New Freedom.

- The Exodus As A Model of Adoption (Romans 9:4; Exodus 4:22-23; Hosea 11:1)

- We’ve Been Freed From The Law (Galatians 4:1-7)

- We’ve Been Freed From Sin (Romans 6:6)

- **Adoption is Judicial. (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1)**

- A Formal Declaration - God Is The Judge Declaring The Verdict

- A Loving Declaration - God Is The Father Receiving The Child

- **Adoption is Past, Present, and Future**

- Adoption was planned from eternity past (Ephesians 1:5)
- Adoption is accomplished in the present
- Adoption is completed in the future
  - Future Adoption Language (Romans 8:23)
  - Future Inheritance Language (Ephesians 1:13-14)

“All things are ours by virtue of adoption” (Richard Sibbes)

What do we inherit?

1. The Kingdom (Ephesians 5:5)
2. Salvation (Hebrews 1:14)
3. The world (Romans 4:13)
4. The resurrection (Romans 8:22-23)

### **III. Adoption: What It Does**

- **Adoption Makes God Our Father. (John 1:12)**

- We want to be like our Father (Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 2:15)

- We receive discipline from our Father (Hebrews 12:8)
- We receive love from the Father (1 John 3:1)
- Our allegiance is to our Father (1 John 5:21)
- We receive comfort from our Father (2 Corinthians 1:3)
- We receive access to our Father (Ephesians 2:18)
- We receive the compassion of our Father (Psalm 103:13)
- We receive the protection of our Father (Proverbs 14:26)
- We receive provision from our Father (Matthew 6:26)
- **Adoption Makes Christ Our Brother. (Mark 3:34; John 20:17)**
  - Jesus claims us as siblings (Hebrews 2:11)
  - Jesus sympathizes with us as a sibling (Hebrews 2:11)
  - Jesus fellowships with us as a sibling (1 John 1:3)
  - Jesus goes before us to death and resurrection as our Elder brother (Romans 8:29)
  - Jesus shares his inheritance he receives as the Elder Brother (Romans 8:17)

- **Adoption Makes the Spirit Our Companion. (Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:16)**
  - The Spirit brings the benefits of adoption into our experience
    - *Without the Spirit we would be like orphans (John 14:18)*
  - The Spirit confirms in our hearts that we are God's children Romans 8:16
  - The Spirit causes us to walk in the way of the Father (Romans 8:14)
  
- **Adoption Makes The Church Our Family. (1 John 3:14-18)**
  - Adoption estranges us from the world, and united us to the church.
    - "If we did but know what this privilege of adoption was, all the riches of all the kingdoms in the world would be but as filthy dung to us." (Jeremiah Burroughs, *The Saints' Happiness*, 194)
  - Adoption changes the way we think about the Old Testament (and church history too!) (1 Corinthians 10:1)
  - Adoption changes the way we think of one another (1 John 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:5; 2 John 13)
    - All true believers are our brothers and sisters (1 Thess. 5:5)

- All true churches are our sisters (2 John 13)
  
- Older saints are parents, younger saints are children (Philippians 2:22; 1 Timothy 5:1)
  
- Adoption changes the way we speak to one another (1 Corinthians 4:14)

## IV. Growing In Our Awareness Of Adoption

- **The Two Gifts of Word and Spirit**

- The Word is the external witness.
  
- The Spirit is the internal witness.

- The Ordinary Work of the Spirit In Our Hearts:

Thomas Manton, The Spirit's Witness With Our Spirit:

1. The Spirit lays down marks of grace in Scripture
  
2. He works such graces as are peculiar to God's children, and are evidences of our interest in the favor of God
  
3. He helpeth us to feel and discover those acts in ourselves.



4. The Spirit helps us to compare them with the rule of Scripture, and accordingly to judge of their sincerity
  5. The Spirit helps us to conclude rightly our estate.
  6. He enlivens and heightens our apprehensions in all these particulars, and so fill us with comfort, and raiseth our joy upon the feeling of the sense of the favor of God; for all this is the fruit of his operation.
- The Extraordinary Work of the Spirit in Our Hearts:
    1. “There is a testimony of the Holy Spirit unto our adoption, which comes as a mighty light, more directly breaking in upon our minds, to assure us, that we are indeed the adopted of God.” Cotton Mather, *The Sealed Servants of God Appearing With Two Witnesses*, 16.
    2. “Let us pray ourselves into this relation, and groan after it, that we may have a clearer sense that God is our Father in Christ.”  
Thomas Manton
  - **Remembering The Sonship of Christ**
    - “Make use of Jesus Christ. If you cannot come to God as your Father, come to him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let Christ bring you into God’s presence. Take him along with you in your arms. God to God in Christ’s name.” Thomas Manton

- We are only made into beloved children through the Beloved Son.

- **Remembering The Mercy of the Father**

Joel Beeke, (adapted from Thomas Manton):

- Plead your sense of fatherlessness to the Father. Especially use texts like Hosea 14:3, “In thee the fatherless find mercy.” and Psalm 27:10, “For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.”
- Come to the Father like the prodigal son, confessing your unworthiness.

## **V. Conclusion**