

The Spirit of Adoption 1 Ex 4:21-23; John 14:12-20; Rom 8:12-17

Audio: <https://www.daleappleby.net/index.php/mp3-sermons/51-recent-sermons/1022-the-spirit-of-adoption-1>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/gbvFPyAFnOk>

Introduction

Since the Fall, history has been an intense struggle of humans resisting the revelation that God is a loving Father. Given the failures of human fathers, and all authority figures, every human heart has an inbuilt bias against submitting to God as Father. Most deeply, sin is an un-sonly rejection of divine Fatherhood. Our aggressive rejection of Fatherly love means the Spirit of adoption must be more powerful than any demon or idol that binds us. This must involve his use of God's Word. Whilst Christ and the scriptures are Word of God, the one we see through them is the Father. For example, in the Sermon on the Mount "Father" appears more than twice the topic of the "kingdom of God" (17 to 8). Jesus is so central to John's Gospel because in it he is the way *to the Father*, the Truth *of the Father* and the Life *of the Father* (John 14:6). The Son's bold declaration, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30 cf. 17:11, 22), means any claimed intimacy with Christ while neglecting the Father is spiritually impossible. Whilst during the "Jesus Movement" we had our Jesus Houses, Jesus' T-shirts and Jesus badges, but little knowledge of God as Father, its clear in hindsight we really didn't know Jesus well at all. The Charismatic movement has generally failed to understand that spiritual gifts in Church are a share in the charisms first given to the Son of God *by his Father!* The failure to know deeply the love of the Father is puzzling and troubling. To use an important historical example, the doctrine of adoption has often been placed in the shadow of justification. J. I. Packer's assessment of this situation is correct, "Justification is the basic blessing, on which adoption is founded; adoption is the crowning blessing, to which justification clears the way." Sonship is the pinnacle of human nature and the expression of the image of God. The Church today desperately needs a Father movement.

The Whole Trinity

The act of divine adoption is so deep and intimate that it engages the whole Trinity. When scripture teaches, "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16), it is referring to the Father, who is the origin of all the love we receive in Jesus through the Spirit. Adoption brings wonder and rapture because it means dynamically sharing in the life of God (2 Pet 1:4). Precisely because adoption is the impartation of new life flowing from the whole Trinity no limits can be placed on its benefits. Freedom from enslavement to law, limitless eternal inheritance and future glory are all fruit of adoption (Rom 8:18). Sonship is a thread holding scripture together.

Sons Created and Fallen

Though Adam was created "the son of God" (Luke 3:38) and humans are "offspring" of the Creator (Acts 17:28-29), the loss of God's glory through sin (Rom 3:23) and bondage to Satan's false fathering (Matt 13:38; John 8:44; 1 John 3:8, 12) have devastated our relationship with God as Father. However, we must never think that the sharing in Christ's sonship through adoption merely takes us back to Eden, adoption is a dynamic end-times event which gives us

something “much more” than Adam ever possessed (Rom 5: 15, 17). In the process of coming to Christ I need to say a few things about the adoption of Israel.

Israel is a Son

In speaking of the Lord’s covenant relationship with Israel Paul puts adoption at the head of a list of benefits, “to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.” (Rom 9:4). No matter how dreadful Israel’s apostasy e.g. “say to a tree, ‘you are my father’” (Jer 2:27) she is always God’s graciously adopted son (Ex 4:22-23; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1) called to reverence, love, trust and obey him as Father (Deut 14:1; 32:6; Isaiah 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer 3:19, 22; Mal 1:6). The failure of Israel to be a submissive son points us to Jesus as the human Son the Father never had; truly and fully everything humanity was created to be.

The Unique Son

Unlike us, the eternal Son never needed adopting (John 3:17; 11:27; 17:1,5; 1 John 3:8; 4:9 - 14). He is the ‘one and only Son’ (John 1:14,18; 3:16,18; 1 John 4:9). In his writings John carefully reserves the usual word for son (*huios*) only for Jesus. Whilst Christ wonderfully declared, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” (John 20:17), he remains Son by nature, and we are sons by grace. Atonement depends on his Sonship. On the cross the most beloved Son takes on the state of a child of wrath (Eph 2:3 cf. 2 Cor 5:21) and in being fully separated from the Father (Mark 15:34) removes the curse of fatherlessness (Rev 22:3). Christ’s resurrection joy (Heb 12:2) is the joy in which we are adopted into the family of God (Luke 15: 7, 22-24). This is a powerful end-times experience.

Adoption and the End of the World

By resurrection, Jesus was declared “to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness” (Rom 1:3-4). In resurrection Jesus receives honour from the Father as the all-obedient Son (Ps 2:7; Acts 13:33), in ascension his humanity enters a sonship without limit for us. Heaven is the wonderful place the Father has made fit for such a son (Heb 1:5ff.). New Testament believers longed for the End because they understood that their resurrection would be the completion of their union with the sonship of Jesus; “we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Rom 8:23). The glory of sonship (Rom 8:18) is made inwardly real to us by God’s Spirit. “the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead” (Rom 8:11) is “the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”” (Rom 8:15). The S/spirit of adoption (Gal 4:5) testifies to our hearts that the “fullness of time” and “the end of the ages” has come *upon us* in Christ (Gal 4:4; 1 Cor 10:11). From deep within, new covenant sons are conscious that the divine work of re-creating the universe (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 1:10) has dawned, beginning with them.

Conclusion

As the risen, ascended baptiser in the Spirit (Matt 3:11; John 1:33; Acts 2:33), Jesus has received Spirit-power to make sons in his image. He has gloriously returned our orphaned spirits to their heavenly Father. As “sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:36) we keenly anticipate the End (Phil 3:21; 1 John 3:2) about which the Spirit infallibly testifies (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5; Eph 1:13-

14; 4:30). To close with a comment relevant to the COVID19 crisis. In this hour we have authority to suffer as sons in a way that can amaze the orphans of our world (Rom 8:18).