

# ADOPTION

Elder Harold Hunt

Ephesians 1:3-5, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ; According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having **predestinated us unto the adoption** of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will."

I cannot think of a subject which I had more difficulty in understanding than I had with the subject of adoption. But, for that matter, there is probably not a simpler subject in the Bible. The problem that arose in my mind, and the problem that bothers most people, is simply this: **If we are born of the Spirit of God, why is it necessary for us to be adopted?** My wife and I have four natural born children, and the thought of adopting those children has never entered our minds. Can you imagine how people would react if I told them we were thinking about adopting those children?

The Bible does teach that we are born of the Spirit of God, and it also teaches that we are adopted. But, why are both necessary?

## The Broadest of All Subjects

Most of the difficulty in understanding the adoption stems from the fact that very few Bible readers realize all that is involved in adoption. It is a much broader subject than most Bible readers have ever imagined. Outside of the subject of God himself, the subject of adoption is probably the broadest subject in the Bible. **The adoption began in eternity past; it will be concluded in eternity to come; and it involves everything God does for his children in between.**

Regeneration, or being born again, is just one part of the adoption process. Regeneration is one of the things that makes God's adoption of his children different from any other adoption that has ever taken place. But, I am getting ahead of myself. We will get to that later.

## What is Adoption?

What is adoption, anyway? What does it signify for a child to be adopted? Adoption simply means the legal act of taking of a child out of one family and putting that child into another family. We are by nature the children of Adam. We are all descendants of our great-great-great granddaddy Adam. Every human being is descended from Adam. He is a member of the family of Adam. We are all descended from a single ancestor. We are all members of the one huge family of Adam.

I have noticed that if a person has kinfolks who are rich or famous, very often, it will conveniently come up in his conversation that he has some famous kinfolks. Well, I can tell you that you and I have some mighty famous kinfolks. Do you remember old King Pharaoh, who had all the little Jewish babies drowned? That was a distant cousin of yours and mine. He was a very, very distant cousin; but he was kinfolks. We are all related in Adam. Do you remember King Herod, who had all the little babies from two years old and under killed. He was kinfolks. And Adolph Hitler? He was a distant cousin. You and I came out of a mighty rough family.

We are all partakers of the same nature—all partakers of the sin of Adam—all descended from Adam. But, by grace, we are all taken out of that family and made members of God's family. **That is what adoption is all about. It is God's taking us out of Adam's family, and placing us in his family.**

### **The Choice of the Child**

Let me ask you, what is the first act of any adoption? After you have determined to adopt a child, the very first act of adoption is the choice of the child to be adopted. Can you imagine that my wife and I might decide to adopt a child, and we put a notice in the paper: "To whom it may concern, Harold and Doris Hunt intend to adopt a child. Anybody interested in being adopted, please be at the Blount County Court House next Tuesday morning at 9:00 o'clock." That is not the way it is done. We do not send out a general call for anybody, who might want to be adopted.

**The first act of the adoption is the choice, the election, of the child to be adopted.**

It is no accident that what God does for his children is called adoption. The very first thing we do when we adopt a child is to choose the child to be adopted. And Paul tells us that is exactly what God did. Ephesians 1:4-5, "According as **he hath**

**chosen us** in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; **having predestinated us unto the adoption of children** by Jesus Christ unto himself.” Adoption is the huge framework within which the rest of our salvation fits. Election, the choice of the child, is the first act of adoption.

### **The Legal Work**

Involved in any adoption there is some legal work that must be taken care of. You cannot just spot some attractive little boy walking along the road and decide, “I think I will adopt that child.” You cannot just pull over to the side of the road and invite him into your car and go on your way. That is not the way it is done; you can get in big trouble that way. There is legal work that has to be taken care of. There may be natural parents whose claim has to be satisfied.

Two of the most unhappy people I think I ever knew were two people in my home town, who took a little boy to raise without bothering to adopt him legally. His mother did not care anything about him. She did not care much about herself, and she gave the little boy to that couple to raise. They were very poor people. They could barely provide for themselves. But they provided the little boy a place in their home. They showered him with their love, and they provided him with everything they were able to provide.

But after awhile, his mother changed her way, and she changed her mind about the little boy, and one day she came to get him. That old couple would just as soon have had their right arm cut off as to give that little fellow up, but the legal work had never been taken care of. The claim of the natural parent had to be satisfied, and when she came to get the little boy, all they could do was to give him up.

There was a legal claim to be satisfied, and that is what the Lord was doing on the cross of Calvary. He was taking care of the legal work of our adoption.

Isaiah said, “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied”(Isaiah 53:11). Every attribute of God will be satisfied in the salvation of his people. The love of God will be satisfied, because everybody God loves will be there. The grace of God will be satisfied, because every subject of grace will be there. And the justice of God will be satisfied, because every sin will have been paid for—atoned for.

God does not sacrifice justice in order to be merciful. I hear folks preach as if God says to Justice, “Now Justice, you be still; Justice, don't you say a word. Justice, I

am going to save this child, and there is nothing you can do about it.” God does not hogtie Justice in order to be merciful. The justice of God is satisfied in the salvation of his people.

Suppose you go blazing down the interstate doing ninety miles an hour, and after awhile, the patrolman catches you and pulls you over and writes you a ticket. Then you go before the judge, and you say, “Judge, I don't know why I did that; I don't make a habit of driving that way. I never have driven that fast before, and Judge, I promise you, if you let me off this time, I will never do that again.” The judge may tear up the ticket and say, “That is alright. Don't you worry; I will take care of it.” Now, that is mercy, but there is not a trace of justice in it.

I hear people preach as if that is the way God saves people, as if God simply says, “Now, don't you worry about it. That is alright. I am going to take care of it.” But God is not a softhearted, softheaded, old judge, sitting out there somewhere fixing speeding tickets.

The justice of God will be satisfied in the salvation of his people. There is no chance that on that final day the Justice of God will step forward and say, “That child is mine; he owes a sin debt to me; I have a claim against him; I demand what is mine.” There is no chance of that, because the justice of God will be satisfied in the salvation of his people.

### **The Expense of Adoption**

An adoption is not free; there is some expense involved. That is where redemption comes in. Paul talked about that in the Galatian letter. “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4-5). To redeem means to buy back, to pay the purchase price. Redemption was the purchase price of adoption. And that is what the Lord did on the cross. He paid the price of our redemption, the expense of our adoption.

“For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's” I Corinthians 6:20. He bought us; he paid for us; he paid the redemption price, and he is going to have what he paid for. Sometimes you and I pay a price, and we do not get full value for our purchase price. But you can be sure that God is going to have what he paid for. God will have with him in glory every one he redeemed and paid for on the cross.

The purchase price which the Lord paid on the cross of Calvary was the most expensive transaction this old world has ever known. “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” I Peter 1:18-19.

When God created this old world, it did not tax his energies in the least. I used to think God rested on the seventh day, because he was tired. He did not rest on the Sabbath day, because he was tired; he rested, because he was through. He had created all the worlds he intended to create. God could have created ten million worlds like this and never taxed his energies in the least.

When God created this world, he only created so much gold and silver. There is no more gold and silver today than there was the day he created it. But God could have created ten million worlds like this, if he had wanted to, and he could have made every mountain on every world of gold. And he could have given ten million solid gold mountains for my redemption and yours, and that would have been such a small price to pay, compared to the price he did pay for our redemption. That would have been a bargain basement price. That would have been pocket change, compared to the price he did pay. He gave the very best heaven had for our redemption. He gave his only Son.

### **Both Adopted and Born**

When you and I adopt a child, we are somewhat limited in what we are able to do for that child. We give him our name. We give him a place in our home. We shower him with our love, and we do everything we conceivably can for him. But there are some things we cannot do. We cannot give him the color of our eyes. We cannot give him the color of our hair, the shape of our nose, the cut of our chin, the sound of our voice.

It is in the nature of children to look like and to sound like their natural parents. I have three daughters, and to some degree or another, they all sound like my wife on the telephone. Sometimes, when I call home, if I know the girls are all there, I have to ask who I am talking to.

That used to be very confusing to one of my sons-in-law, before he became my son-in-law. One day he called to talk to my daughter, and my wife answered the phone.

He said, “Hi, whatcha doin’?”

And my wife said, “Watchin’ television.”

Somewhat later in the conversation he said, “Just exactly who is it I am talkin’ to?”

It is in the nature of children to look like—to walk like—and sound like their natural parents, and in our old carnal nature, we took like, and walk like, and sound like our great-great-granddaddy Adam. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” John 3:6.

You and I cannot give an adopted child our physical characteristics. We cannot make him look like us, and walk and talk the way we do. But God is not limited the way we are. And right here is where the new birth comes in. The new birth is one part of the adoption. He came “to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” Galatians 4:5. Because we are sons by choice, we are made sons by birth.

We cannot make that adopted child to look like us. He was born of his natural parents, and it is his nature to look like his natural parents. But God adopts his children, who were born of Adam, and he births them again to look like him. We are made “partakers of the divine nature” II Peter 1:4, and in spirit we look like our heavenly Father. We look like our brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

In Hebrews, chapter one, Paul described the Lord in this way: “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows” Hebrews 1:9. And in the Sermon on the Mount the Lord described his children: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled” Matthew 5:6. Do you notice the family resemblance? Did you ever see somebody, who, even if nobody told you, you knew that he had to be such and such a person's son? He was either his son or his brother; he looked just like him.

It is in the tendency of God's children to look alike. I am not talking about the color of their eyes, nor the cut of their chin. I am talking about those characteristics which show up in their lives as the result of the Spirit of God living in their hearts. I am talking about that love for God, and for the things of God, which is characteristic of every member of the family of God. I am talking about the expression on their face, when you talk to them about the good things of the Lord. Did you ever notice, when you are talking to somebody about the Lord and his goodness, that his face may begin to take on color, and sometimes, his eyes begin to fill and run over, and

every now and then, his chin begins to tremble. I see a family resemblance there, don't you?

There have been a lot of people, down through the years, who have tried to paint pictures of the Lord. They do not know what he looked like. I know those pictures do not look like the Lord, because, for one thing, they all show him with long hair, and my Bible says, "Doth not even nature itself teach you that if a man have long hair it is a shame unto him" I Corinthians 11:14. He would never have worn his hair long, and then later inspired Paul to say that long hair was a shame to a man. Some of those pictures show him with bare feet. I don't believe the Lord went around barefoot. John said that his "shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose" John 1:27. So he wore shoes. The pictures I have seen don't look particularly Jewish. According to the flesh, he was "made of the seed of David" Romans 1:3. "According to the flesh" he was a Jew. Those pictures I have seen look noticeably Caucasian. In his physical appearance the Lord was so typically Jewish, and his appearance was so normal, compared to the Jews of his day, that he could stand before a crowd and preach to them for a long time, and, when, finally, his voice fell silent, he could walk back through the crowd, and they would not know who he was. He looked that much like everybody else.

But I believe we can know a little about what he looked like. I find a verse in Second Corinthians which reads: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" II Corinthians 3:18. This text teaches that those who behold the glory of the Lord are literally changed into the image of the Lord. What does that mean? It means that those who love the Lord, and consistently look to him for guidance, begin to take on his characteristics.

Once in awhile it happens in nature. You may have seen it. It does not happen often. But once in awhile it happens that when two people are married so long, for many years heart answers to heart, until finally, in their old days, face answers to face. I was away on a trip some time ago, and the folks my wife and I stayed with looked very much alike. My wife can be a little skeptical at times, but even my wife noticed it. After we left, my wife commented about "how much they look alike." Once in a while it happens in nature. For years and years heart answers to heart, until, finally, in their old days, face answers to face.

But, while it only happens once in awhile in nature, it happens, as the rule, in our service toward God. The more you follow your Lord, the more you endeavor to serve him, the more you listen to him, and walk in his precepts, the more you look like him.

I don't know a lot about his physical characteristics, but I believe I do know this about him. I believe that when he stood and preached the gospel of his grace, the expression on his face was that same expression I can see in the faces of his children, when they are intently listening and being fed on the gospel message. And I believe that expression is the very expression I will see on the face of my Lord on that good morning, when I see him on that eternal day.

God is not limited as you and I are. We cannot give our adopted children the color of our eyes, nor the cut of our chin. We cannot make them look like us. But in regeneration God makes his children to begin to resemble him. They are made “partakers of the divine nature.” They are still human, still mortal, still sinners of Adam's race, but the Spirit of God living in their hearts has its effect, and more and more, they resemble the family of God.

### **The Paperwork**

Every adoption generates some paperwork. If the adoption is legal and binding, there will be documents to prove it. This adoption generated some papers. Our adoption is not recorded with paper and ink; it is written on the tables of our heart. We are taught in our hearts to know that we are the children of God. “Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” II Corinthians 5:5.

Those of you who have been involved in real estate could teach me more than I have ever imagined about the principle of earnest money. Earnest money is given in advance of the actual transaction as a kind of pledge to bind the bargain. It is an advance payment, which indicates that you intend to carry through with the deal. God's Spirit in the hearts of his children bears witness that he intends to carry through with his promise. It is evidence that he intends to carry the recipient of that Spirit home to live with him in glory.

Can you imagine a little boy in an orphanage? He is so lonely. The people who run the place do the best they can to take care of him, but that is not like having parents to take him in their arms and love him as their own. And can you imagine that one day he hears he has been adopted by the richest, the kindest, the most gentle man in that town, and the adoption papers are on file in the front office? Do you have an idea that while he is waiting, every now and then, he would like to go to the office, and look at the adoption papers, and see that his name is written there? And don't you think he would appreciate it if somebody would show him the papers? That is what I am trying to do with this little booklet. I hope you can get just a glimpse of



the adoption papers. “Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit”—a pledge that seals the bargain.

If you feel the Spirit of God stirring in your heart that is the earnest of your inheritance. That is your evidence that you are a heaven-bought, heaven-bound child of God. From your vantage point, that is the paperwork of your adoption. From God’s vantage point Job says, “Also now, behold my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high” Job 16:19. Paul says, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his” II Timothy 2:19. That is talking about the firm and sure decrees of God, written in the halls of eternity, but right now, we are looking at the evidence of the adoption as it is written in the heart of God’s children, and we will save the other aspect of the question for another time.

### **The Evidence of Our Adoption**

In Romans 8, Paul says, “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” Romans 8:15. The very first words children learn to say are Mama or Papa, or perhaps Da-da. I have never entirely figured out whether children learn to say Mama and Papa first, because we teach them to say that, or whether it is just natural for them to learn to make those sounds early, so ages ago parents learned to call themselves that. I don’t know, and I am not going to worry about it, but this is another way in which our heavenly Father is like our natural parents. God delights to hear us acknowledge him as our Father, and because of that, he has “given us the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Abba is the Hebrew expression for father. It is a very simple sound, very much like Papa or Da-da. How simple a thing to say. It is so simple that a little child can say it—Abba, Father.

Romans 8:23, “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.” In the old days the Jews had a feast called the Feast of the Firstfruits. That meant that the full crop was coming after awhile. That is what it means when we feel the Spirit of God stirring in our hearts. Those are the firstfruits —“the firstfruits of the Spirit.” The full crop is coming after awhile.

The firstfruits of the Spirit are the firstfruits of the adoption. It indicates that the climax of the adoption, the final act of the adoption, is coming after awhile.

I have heard it said that we do not know anything at all about what heaven is going to be like. I believe we can know something about it. I believe it is going to be a

whole lot of what we get just a little of down here. These are the firstfruits. The last fruits are like the firstfruits. There is just a lot more of it. If you have ever had the first taste of apple pie, you have a pretty good idea of what the rest of the pie is going to be like. And if you have ever felt God's Spirit moving in your heart, you have a good idea of what heaven is going to be like.

Some folks have gotten the idea from Romans 8:23, the adoption will not take place until the resurrection. But, no, the resurrection is when the adoption will finally be complete. It has been going on all along. It started a long time ago. It started in eternity past when God determined upon the adoption. The first act of the adoption was when he chose his family in Christ Jesus in eternity past. Then he did all the legal work that was necessary for our adoption in sending his son to suffer and die on the cross, and to satisfy every just claim of the law. He paid the price of our redemption. Then he sent his Spirit into our hearts in the work of regeneration.

### **Waiting to Go Home**

Now we are waiting—waiting for the final act of adoption. I am enjoying the wait. I used to say I would like to live to be ninety years old, and preach twice a day until then. But I don't think I could quite stand up to that. I have tried preaching twice every day, and that is more than I can handle. I would not mind to live to be ninety years old, and preach once a day. I am enjoying the wait. Paul said, “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” Philippians 1:21. I am not in any hurry to leave this old world.

But the older I get, and the closer I get to the end of my journey, the more I think about that day, when my heavenly Father will come for me. The last act of adoption is when the adopting father comes and gets his child, and takes him to live with him in that big house on the hill. I am looking forward, with fond anticipation, to that good day, when the final act of adoption will come, and we will be forever at home with the Lord. hlh