

Our Adoption

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 19th June 2011

Intro-

- Martin Luther grew up haunted by a stained-glass window from his boyhood church, a window depicting Christ as a stern king with a raised sword. The sword appeared to Luther exactly like a rod. How do we view God? Father's day- many thanking their father's for the good job they have done, or being thanked. But for many their concept of 'father' is difficult. When we become Christians we learn that God has adopted us into His family as His children, but often our view of God is coloured by our upbringing.
- This morning we will be looking at the nature of our adoption as sons (and daughters) by God and the implications of this to our lives.

Read Rom 8:15-17

Our adoption means we have SECURITY. It releases us from fear- v 15 '...did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear'

- Firstly Paul speaks about what our adoption is not. He uses the metaphor of a slave cowering before a heavy-handed master. What is this fear he describes?

1. FEAR OF FAILURE

- **'...did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear'**. Notice that word 'again'? The first aspect I believe Paul is describing of this fear is a fear of failure. It refers to Paul's previous failures at living a holy life. Our adoption is not a repetition of trying to meet someone's expectations and failing. Sometimes parents can be over-critical and perfectionist, which can lead to a striving in their children. Our heavenly Father is not like that- His love for us is not based on our performance, as He has already qualified us
'...giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light'. Col 1:12.
- Paul had previously said in Rom 7:13-25, that, as a Jew, he was trying to be right with God by obeying the law of Moses. However, he explained that, although he knew God's rules and delighted in them he was only too aware that he could not keep all of them and was a lawbreaker. He realised that, if it depended on his ability, he would be under God's wrath- hence the fear. However, he came to know a different way, the only way, of being right with God- through grace- accepting what God has done on our behalf. When we too accept this, we are not constantly trying to win God's approval- we already have it.
Two rabbinical students were caught by the Rabbi gambling and drinking in the company of undesirable characters -- even before the sun set on the evening of the Sabbath. The Rabbi called them into his study the next day. Both confessed to having given in to weakness, and admitted that they deserved punishment. The Rabbi thought and then went into his kitchen and brought back two bags of dried peas. "Put these in your shoes," he told them, "and walk on them for a week, to remind yourself how hard life can be when you turn away from the Law." A few days later the two students met. One was limping terribly, had dark circles under his eyes, and looked very tired. The other seemed much as he had been the week before. "Hey," said the first. "How is it that you are walking so freely. Didn't you do as the Rabbi told us and put the peas in your shoes." "Of course I did," said the other. "How could I disobey the Rabbi?" He started to walk away, paused and then said "But I boiled them first."
- It doesn't matter how many dried peas we put in our shoes, we are going to mess up at some point. Why don't we accept Jesus' perfect law-keeping paid freely to our account? How much are you relying on grace, or have you gone back to relying on your own performance in order to feel you are accepted by God? Did your parents ever allow you freedom to fail? Do you allow yourself space to make mistakes? God doesn't condemn us when we mess up, but gives us grace to get back up and try again.

2. FEAR OF PUNISHMENT

- The second aspect of the fear I believe Paul is describing, concerning those who don't understand the nature of their adoption by God, is a fear of punishment. The slave who works for a harsh master fears a beating if things aren't perfect. We may have had experience of parents who were too heavy-handed. Maybe teachers at school were a little heavy on the discipline. God is not like that. Adoption is not getting to know our executioner a little bit better. Some people find it hard to live as joyful Christians because they still have the feeling that judgement is hanging over them. Paul here calls this misunderstanding a 'slavery' to fear. How can we break this fear slavery? By accepting 2 simple truths:
- i) **GOD HAS ALREADY TAKEN OUR PUNISHMENT.** The punishment for our sin is death, but Jesus has already taken this death-penalty upon Himself on our behalf to free us from the fear of death, or any other punishment:
'Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that **by his death** he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- and free those who all their lives were **held in slavery by their fear of death**.' -Heb 2:14-15.
- It would be unjust of God to punish you again after Jesus has already borne your death penalty.
- **Application-** If you know you have this fear then stop waiting for things to go wrong. There is no cloud hanging over you- it's in your mind. Satan has tricked you into believing something which isn't true. You are God's child- He loves you. Believe the truth and you will know freedom- 'You shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free'.
- ii) **GOD IS NO LONGER ANGRY WITH US.** Propitiation- God is propitious (favourable) towards us. Paul had started his letter to the Romans by saying God is angry with the Gentiles (Rom 1:18-32) and the Jews alike (Rom 2:1-20) and will judge all mankind without partiality. On 'every soul who does evil' there will be: '...indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, of every soul who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek (Gentiles).' (Rom 2:8-9)
He says in his letter to the Ephesians that without Christ we are by nature children of wrath:
"...among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others." -Eph 2:3
This might lead us to a wrong conclusion about God, thinking He is an angry God and not loving, but the opposite is the case- He is a loving God and is slow to anger. However, as a just God He must judge sin and show His righteous anger against it. God resolves this dilemma through the cross. In Rom 3:25, Paul explains that, because of God's graciousness to us He sent His Son to be a:
 1. 'propitiation'
 2. 'by His blood,'
 3. 'through faith'. A propitiation is something which turns away anger/wrath. In other words, God is not angry with us, but favourable towards us ('propitiation') when we accept Jesus' sacrifice ('by His blood') if we simply believe in what Jesus did for us, dieing in our place ('by faith').
"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world." 1 Jn2:1-2
Jesus bore the full brunt of the anger of God against our sin when he died on the cross:
'Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand.' -Is 53:10
- **The result is we have peace with our Father:**
'Now therefore, we have peace with God (the Father) through our Lord Jesus Christ' -Rom 5:1
- If, while you were God's enemy He sent His Son to die for you, how much more now that you have accepted what He has done will He accept you?

- What about scriptures which say we are to fear God, such as 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'? This means, not that we are fearful of God's judgement, but rather that we are eager to please Him because we love Him. In other words, we have a desire to be holy, not to be made right with God, but because He has already made us right with Himself. Jesus exemplified the 'fear of the Lord'- He was not fearful of the Father's punishment, as He was without sin, however He delighted to do God's will (delighted in the 'fear of the Lord').
- Grace sets us free from fear. Perfect love casts out fear. When we realise just how much God the Father loves us we are no longer scared that He is out to punish us. We recognise that when He disciplines us it is for our own good out of love. He wants us to succeed, not fail. He believes in us in the light of the cross- He believes that His grace is sufficient for us to really shine.
- **APPLICATION-** Motivation for what we do. All our ministry from a place of security, rather than insecurity.
- Learn to see yourself as God sees you.
- Forgive parents for the areas where they messed up and realise that we too mess up regularly.

Our adoption means we have INTIMACY- v15 'received the spirit of adoption by whom we cry out 'Abba, father''

- 'Abba' is Aramaic for father- intimate term like 'daddy' but without babyish connotations. Jesus said 'Abba' when He addressed God, and also told us to address God as our Father. There is a Christian book with the title 'I dared to call Him Father' about the conversion of a Muslim girl to Christianity- it is one of the privileges we have as Christians that we treasure.
- In Jewish homes the Talmud forbade slaves from addressing their masters as 'Abba' (daddy) or 'Imma' (mummy), but a slave could be adopted as a son and receive full inheritance rights.
- In Roman life adoption was a common process and people would adopt to keep the family line going and to have an heir where they were either childless or where they had disowned a child due to bringing the family name into disrepute.
- It was common to adopt adults, and people would still have contact with their old families, but their responsibilities would be to their new family and they would take on a new name, whilst also keeping their old name as a nickname. It was usually males who were adopted (as heirs) but women were also adopted.
- Slaves could also be adopted. When they were adopted they left their old status and gained the same status as if they were the actual son of the father adopting them. They came under his benefits as a son as well as under his fatherly discipline.
- Any debts that were previously owed to the slave being adopted were taken on by the new father, and more significantly, any debts they previously had were cancelled due to their change in status- they literally started a new life.
- An adopted slave actually had more rights than naturally born sons as legally they could not be disowned by the new father.
- When a person was adopted there were 3 questions asked:
 1. The adopting father was asked whether he wished that the person he was going to adopt should be his lawful son.
 2. The person to be adopted was asked whether he should suffer it to be so
 3. Witnesses were asked whether they were happy for it to happen.
- Paul says in verse 16 of our passage that the 'Holy Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are children of God'. In other words, God the father has chosen us- that's why He sent His Son to start off our adoption process by dying in our place. We

(our spirits) said 'yes' to being adopted. The Holy Spirit also says a big 'yes' to the adoption, as a willing witness to the event and- job done! There is now no going back, or being dis-inherited! We are His kids!

- Christ is God's beloved Son (see Eph 1:6- 'He made us accepted in the Beloved'), but we too are called His beloved

'...constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren beloved by God, His choice of you;' -1 Thess 1:3-4

It was because God the Father so loved us that He sent His Son in the first place- John 3:16.

See also:

"I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." Jn17:23

"In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I shall pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God." -Jn16:26-27

- In Rome, though adoption conferred rights to the one being adopted it also came with new responsibilities. Paul highlights that we now have an obligation to not live a sinful lifestyle any more- that is our old lifestyle when we were slaves to sin. If we do, it does not nullify our adoption, but shows a lack of appreciation of it.
- Do you feel loved by God as Father? Do you see Him as a loving Father? Are there any barriers in your mind to this happening? Are there parental figures in your life that you need to forgive for not being there, or not loving you in the way they should have? Bring any concerns you have to Him in prayer, and pray for a fresh revelation today of just how much He loves you.

Our adoption means we have an INHERITANCE- 'heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ'

- There is a cartoon showing a lawyer reading the last will and testament of his client to a room full of greedy relatives. The caption reads: "I, John Jones, being of sound mind and body, spent it all!" When Jesus wrote his will, He gave us all He had. Not only that but He also died so it could be in effect. (Hebrews 9:15-17)
- The amazing thing about a Roman slave being adopted was that they became an inheritor of their new father's estate. It is the same for us. Not only is our new dad not going to punish us, not angry with us, but loving and tender towards us, but also He is going to give us 'all things' (Rom 8:32). He is going to bless us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms (Eph 1:3). He has already shown us His willingness to give us things we need by giving up His own dear Son to save us- if He didn't hold Jesus back, he won't hold Heaven back from us either!
- We are already adopted but there is an outworking, a fullness which is yet to come. We have received half - the Spirit of sonship in perishable bodies. We are awaiting the second half - our physical bodies becoming transformed and a new heaven and earth - glory and rewards.
- What does it mean to share in His suffering? Not atoning for our sins- we cannot. It means going through trials, hardships of life generally, but also suffering because of the gospel (i.e. persecution). Whilst still in this mortal body and in this fallen world things are not yet perfect- we feel sorrow, pain, infirmity. We will one day die. Sure God heals us and takes our sorrows etc. God even raises the dead now, only to die later. But there is a fuller healing coming, a complete end to suffering, when Christ returns. There is also the suffering related to discipline. God disciplines us in love as His children so that we learn to walk as Jesus walked.
- The tension is between the groaning we experience now and the glory we shall experience later. Paul says the glory will be so great that it's not even worth comparing to the groaning we have now which is minute in comparison.
- 3 groanings like labour pains until the Sons of God are fully birthed into all their fullness and is also confirmation - if labour pains are happening, there is a baby on

the way:

1 - Creation groaning because it will be liberated from famines/ droughts / earthquakes / extreme weather etc. Jesus predicted these as birth pains- 'When you see these things, your redemption is near'.

"For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now." -Rom8:19-22

2 - Christians groaning 'in this present tent' waiting to be clothed in our imperishable body- Persecutions, sickness, tiredness, trauma, sorrow, pain, suffering.

"Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance." - Rom8:23-25

3 - Holy Spirit groaning through us before God the Father to intercede for our prayers - inheritance situations - not tongues - groans - wooaw !!!

"Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." -Rom8:26

These 3 groanings are labour pains indicating a baby is on the way- us! God's kids!

- How often do you think about the glories which are coming? It might not feel like we are adopted by the King when we are going through troubles, but think about Jesus and all He went through, and think about where He is now, and how blessed He is right now. He has prepared a place for you too. You are loved by Your dad more than you can ever imagine! Very shortly you will receive your inheritance- this life is gone in a flash- keep going strong, all Heaven is cheering you on!
- Columnist L. M. Boyd recently described the amazing good fortune of a man named Jack Wurm. In 1949, Mr. Wurm was broke and out of a job. One day he was walking along a San Francisco beach when he came across a bottle with a piece of paper in it. As he read the note, he discovered that it was the last will and testament of Daisy Singer Alexander, heir to the Singer sewing machine fortune. The note read, "To avoid confusion, I leave my entire estate to the lucky person who finds this bottle and to my attorney, Barry Cohen, share and share alike." According to Boyd, the courts accepted the theory that the heiress had written the note 12 years earlier, and had thrown the bottle into the Thames River in London, from where it had drifted across the oceans to the feet of a penniless and jobless Jack Wurm. His chance discovery netted him over 6 million dollars in cash and Singer stock.
- Our adoption ensures us an inheritance that is being kept in Heaven which can never perish, spoil or fade according to 1Pet 1:4.

Summary

Our adoption as sons brings us:

- Security
- Intimacy
- Inheritance

Song: *Father God I wonder*