

Thursday Group Studies
The Fatherhood of God
Study 5
November 16th 2017

The Spirit of Adoption

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

No doubt there is a spirit of adoption as there is a spirit of slavery. We mean that slavery has its own disposition of fear and adoption has its disposition of filial love and freedom. Slavery bears the disposition of its 'father' the devil, as true sonship bears the disposition of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit who creates within us the sonship that Jesus brought into our flesh. And it is the Spirit who leads us in the experience of that sonship of Jesus as he bears witness within that we are indeed children of God, sharing with Christ all that the Father has bequeathed upon his family *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"* The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Romans 8:12-16)

Father's adoption is a work of grace outside of us before it is a work of grace within us. That is, like justification, redemption, forgiveness, holiness etc., all are accomplished for us in the death, resurrection and ascended reign of Jesus. So adoption is secured in Christ for us. However, if we simply comprehend adoption or any of the other blessings in Christ, as legal rights then we miss what Paul is emphasizing in this passage. It is the adopted child who cries Abba, Father! This is a cry from the depths of a human heart with the disposition of a true child.

God has always desired that his children embrace him with the liberating disposition of being his child. So in redeeming his people from Egypt he said to Pharaoh, *Let My son go that he may serve (worship) Me* (Exodus 4:23). Only through the impact of the changed heart, wrought by God's redemption, does the lost child become and behave like Jesus of Nazareth.

Adoption is currently looked upon both positively and negatively in our Australian scene. Sadly the forced adoptions that followed the stolen generation, and many that resulted from unwanted pregnancies, has caused a painful suspicion of adoption as a whole. Many, however they originated, seem to have been a blessing for the adoptees. Yet there remains a longing to know their birth parents. One of the features of adoption often highlighted in the media is this longing to find birth parents. Looking for their 'roots' and a sense of who they are becomes a significant quest for many. This seems especially so where the adopted ones parents are from a different culture to their birth parents.

When it comes to the adoption of children by Father God this scenario is reversed. It is as adopted children that we discover our true roots and true identity. The scene goes like this. The Father was always our true Father. He created us in His image to correspond to/with him and blessed us as part of his family with his presence to delight and secure our hearts. But the 'father' we ran to supplied none of this. His 'adoption' was a lashing out at the true Father and so all humanity. To 'rule' this counterfeit father must attempt to extinguish any presence or indication of the true

Father and his Family. Unable to do this he must resort to and depend upon lies. He is the 'father of lies'. So the glory of God's adoption is that we find ourselves back where we belong. All of our roots and identity are freely restored and fully restoring. No need is felt to find them anywhere else. Father's adoption is not viewed as a temporary thing until we can find our true birth parents.

The lies of the evil one were confronted by Jesus. He came into the world claiming that everything about the Father could only be experienced through his Sonship. *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me (John 14:6).* We note he didn't say "No one comes to God except through me." In saying this, Jesus was confronting two fundamental delusions in the world. They believed they were already children of God but were not, and that they were not children of Satan but were (see John 8). So Jesus saw the world as doubly isolated from the true spirit of sonship. The world was doubly 'not-sonly' as he was Son in our flesh. So the spirit of adoption brings us back from the no-son land of our sinful deceptions. Our attention is not given towards true family as true children. Our thinking is not the thinking of God yet as a race we came to believe that God must think like we do. That we need to be adopted by direct intervention of the Father, Son and Spirit, and receive the spirit of sonship, shows that neither by being created as family in the beginning or by the Son becoming flesh and blood does re-establishment with the Father become automatic.

The Son was always the eternal Son and his Sonship is unique. However, when the eternal Son took on our flesh and blood it was with a view that we become brothers and sisters with him as children of the Father. That is the disposition he showed towards the Father in our flesh and blood be given to us. John Calvin said, What the Mediator was to accomplish was no common thing. His task was to restore us to God's grace as to make of the children of men, the children of God...Who could have done this had not the self-same Son of God became the Son of man, and had not he taken what is ours as to impart what was his to us, and to make what was his by nature ours by grace?...For God's natural Son assumed for himself a body from our body, flesh from our flesh, bones from our bones that he might be one with us who are adopted as his brothers and partners in what he inherits. (Institutes pg. 400, 2.12.2). So when it comes to the spirit (disposition) of sonship we are totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit implanting in us what he implanted and watched flourish in the Son who became our Brother in our flesh and blood. The workmanship (poem) that was written by Father, Son and Spirit in the flesh and blood of Jesus of Nazareth is our inheritance (Ephesians 2:10).

We are God's workmanship (Poem)

A poem takes the passion of the poet and communicates the stuff of life and love in a way that moves us to the chore. Poets spy out the glories and bring them shuddering home into our bleak and painful life. The rhythm and rhyme found in Jesus is not like a ditty but the beat of a heart, the spasm of muscle awakening to function and actively love. Poets shepherd the human spirit not just words.

So there was the Father, writing his long awaited creational glory into the heart of Jesus of Nazareth, the enfleshed Son, who once had written all he knew and felt about the Father into the dust of Adam and Eve Colossians 1:16). The Son entered that same dust, drank the same water and sucked in the same air and most significantly knew the same Father. Though the Serpent came he stayed in the Garden and drank from the river of God's delights.

In him Father was spying out the glories of eternal family and writing them into muscle and bone, blood and synapse. In Jesus Father was: Watching and working as the true human came shuddering into a foreign world of shaky tower builders, and library dwellers. Watching and working as the spirit of his true Man joined with the Holy Spirit and affirmed at every turn that it was good to be Fathered and good to be human. Watching and working as this True Man ruled in grace and love. Watching and working as righteousness, joy and peace blossomed as Kingdom fruitfulness.

Watching as the grace of life enveloped the lost kin of His Son, bringing them into the startling reality of Family and the Garden of the Father's delights. Watching and working as the creation, long locked into its groaning cry to be free, gets a whiff of this great Son and the cry goes up a hundred decibels in quickened anticipation. Watching as his own glory came reflecting back to Him, not from a face or a feature, but a heart that cried, "Abba Father!", the true echo of a human will crying, Who do I have in heaven but You and there is no name on earth I desire besides You. Sonship moves us from straining to do what God does to doing things as God does (PT Forsyth). The spirit of adoption moves us into a disposition that finds nothing about Father's will a burden, a sacrifice or a duty: Into a human spirit drawn into joy by the delight the Father shows in us.

But then comes the crowning glory of this truly formed Man, the Man creating true adoption; The hour when his heart beat in union with the Father in the face of death and hell. The hour when "Abba!" was the deepest cry ever heard from human lips. In the lock-step of love with his Father Jesus took all who had been abducted by sin and lay in its dust and delivered us by adoption back to creation as true Family with the Son. In that lonely hour of death the Father remained this true Man's single desire. Father into Your hands I commend my spirit. But this was no lonesome cry of a single son. This was the cry of the great Poet-Son, the workmanship of His Father crying, "Father, into your hands I commend all my brethren!" Father, Son and Spirit agree, "The glory Father you gave to me I have given to them", the spirit of adoption. And all the family cried weeping with the wonder of it all, *We will behold your face with righteousness and be satisfied with your face when we rise* (Psalm 17:15).