

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 1 of 13

Dear friends, let me call your attention once again to the passage on which we are focusing in this series of messages, which is found in the book of Colossians, in chapter 3, beginning at verse one.

If you are able to do so I hope that you will turn there with me in your own copy of God's Word. It is the Word of God that is central. Anything and everything that this preacher, or any other preacher, has to say must be tested against the Word of God and proved by the Word of God. It is no insult to any true preacher of the Word for his hearers to test what he says, to make sure that it is in fact what Scripture says.

So please turn with me, if you are able, to Colossians chapter 3 beginning at verse one, and let us hear the Word of God:

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, you all will appear with Him in glory.

God's Imperative: Adoption Is a Vital Reason For It

As I've said many times during the course of this series, the words that we have just read are an imperative. They are a command of God. What we have before us is not optional for the Christian. It is essential.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 2 of 13

If indeed we are Christians, if indeed we have been raised with Christ, we must focus our attention on things above, where Christ is, rather than on the things of this earth, which is under God's curse and is passing away and will eventually be destroyed.

We have seen this imperative not only in Colossians but also in many other places in the Word of God. During this part of our series, we are focusing our attention on this theme of heavenly-mindedness as we find it in Paul's epistles to the various churches of the New Testament period.

And at the present time we are focusing our attention especially on one of the most vital reasons why we must set our minds on things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. And that reason is the great fact that every one of us who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ have been given *adoption as sons*.

In our last message, we saw that the picture that we have before us in Scripture is this – that each of us, each believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, male or female, man or woman, boy or girl, has been given the position and the status of an *adopted son* in the eyes of God. The picture we have before us in Paul's epistles is based on the Roman law of adoption that would have been familiar to Paul's readers in that day.

The Roman law of adoption was different for an adopted son than it was for an adopted daughter. The rights and the position that were granted to an adopted daughter under Roman law were not the same, not nearly as extensive, as the

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 3 of 13

rights and privileges that were granted to an adopted son.

To be adopted as a son under Roman law meant that you had the right to the name and the citizenship of the person who adopted you. You had the right to inherit your adopted father's property. The adopted son had the same rights and privileges and position as a naturally born son. These were rights that were not granted to an adopted daughter.

The Roman law of adoption also granted the one who adopted that son the full rights and responsibilities of a natural father, full authority over the adopted son, and full responsibility to care for the adopted son.

That is the picture that we have before us. Each and every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, regenerated and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, has received "the adoption of sons."

Adopted From Before the Foundation of the World

We read of this great truth in several places in Paul's epistles, and I would ask you to turn to them with me if you are able, as I read them. First of all, please turn with me to the book of Ephesians, chapter 1, beginning at verse three. Ephesians, chapter 1, beginning at verse three:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 4 of 13

should be holy and without blame before Him in love, [notice, verse 5] having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

Notice that in this passage we are told that it has been God's plan to redeem a people for Himself as His adopted sons from "before the foundation of the world," through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ in coming into this world to accomplish our redemption.

Adoption Yet To Be Fully Revealed

And then turn with me next, if you are able, to the book of Romans, chapter 8, beginning at verse 14. Romans chapter 8, beginning at verse 14, we read these words:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

And then notice what Paul has to say in the verses that follow about the things that are true because of our position as the adopted sons of God. Notice beginning at verse 18 of Romans chapter 8:

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 5 of 13

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing [notice] of the sons of God.

For the creation was subjected to futility, 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 [notice] of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves [notice] eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

This is the heaven-bound orientation of the adopted sons of God. Nothing that we experience now is worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. The creation itself is yearning for the final revelation, the final consummation, of the adoption of the sons of God.

No Longer a Slave But a Son

Turn with me also, if you are able, to the book of Galatians, chapter 4. We read a much larger section of this passage in our last message, but I want to focus our attention in this message on verses four through seven. Galatians chapter 4,

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 6 of 13

beginning at verse four:

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, [notice] that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

We also saw in our last message that just as we are justified by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, we are also adopted by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Both of these aspects of our salvation are legal transactions in the courtroom of God.

The one transaction that Christ accomplished at the cross, redeeming us, buying us out of the slave market of sin, that one transaction between God the Son and God the Father has brought about both legal acts on our behalf – both justification and adoption. Not only have we been declared not guilty by God the Judge, but God the Judge has adopted us as His own sons!

What a tremendous turnabout. What a tremendous change in our position. We were on our way to Hell. We were without God, without hope in the world. We were lost, spiritually dead, we were totally unable to save ourselves. We were filthy with sin. We were guilty through and through.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 7 of 13

We were condemned to eternal death. God the Righteous Judge had pronounced the sentence against us according to His perfect law, and all that waited for us was for that sentence to be carried out at the Last Judgment. All that waited for us was to be cast into Hell at that Last Day.

But then, God's only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, comes into the courtroom. He comes to the heavenly altar with His own blood. And in one great transaction He not only makes provision for the Judge who condemns us to declare us not guilty, but He also makes provision for the Judge who had condemned us to adopt us as His own sons!

"Behold, What Manner of Love"

Dear friends, this is indescribable grace. This is infinite mercy. The Apostle John marvels at this in his first epistle in chapter three, verse one. He says this:

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

The world does not know God, the world does not know Christ, and the world does not know us, because we are no longer of this world. And then John goes on to say this:

Beloved, now we are the children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He [Jesus] is

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 8 of 13

revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him [has this hope in Jesus] purifies himself, just as He is pure.

"Behold, what manner of love," John says. God who was once your condemning Judge is now God your loving Father!

Absolutely Secure

Furthermore, the Word of God declares to us that this adoption as sons of God is absolutely secure. We saw that the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verse 12 tells us that God has given us the right, the authority, to become and to be called the sons of God. That is in fact who we are, and no one can take it from us. Jesus said this, in John chapter ten, beginning at verse 28:

And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (John 10:28-29)

Dear friend, if you are a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ as you are listening to me today, then you are the adopted son of God, and no one can take you out of God's hand. You are in the double grip of God the Father and God the Son, and no one, nothing, can break their hold upon you.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 9 of 13

A Contemporary Counterfeit of Biblical Adoption

Now let me also give you a warning. There is a false teaching in some circles today about the doctrine of adoption, and it is related to a false teaching about the doctrine of justification and a false teaching about the doctrine of water baptism. There are growing numbers of false teachers today who are saying that we are saved by being united with Christ through water baptism. And these false teachers say that we get the benefits of salvation through water baptism.

And they go beyond that. They say that Jesus was justified, and so therefore we are justified. Jesus was sanctified, and so therefore we are sanctified. And furthermore, they say that Jesus was adopted, so therefore we are adopted. And this false teaching goes on to say that we can lose all of these things, we can lose salvation, we can lose justification, we can lose adoption, if we do not continually keep God's law.

Now dear friends, please listen to me carefully. This is false teaching. It is wrong on so many levels. First of all, we are not saved by water baptism. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. We are saved by the blood of Christ. Water baptism does not save the soul. Water baptism is a witness to the fact that God has done His saving work in an individual. That is how we testify to the fact that we are saved.

And furthermore, Scripture never says that Jesus was justified, so therefore we are justified. And Scripture never says that Jesus was adopted by the Father, so

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 10 of 13

therefore we are adopted. Jesus is the *only begotten* Son of God. Jesus is God the Son. He is sinless. He always was. He always will be.

But this false doctrine of which I am speaking takes Jesus off of His throne as God the Son. It makes Him nothing more than the first Christian. This is a false Jesus. The Christ of the Bible did not need to be justified or sanctified as fallen sinners need to be. He did not need to be adopted. Scripture makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the eternal and *only begotten* Son of God. We are the ones who are *adopted* sons of God according to Scripture

And dear friends, we cannot lose our adoption in Christ. The way these false teachers have it, it is as though God is saying, "If you don't behave yourself, if you don't keep My law, I'll tear up the adoption papers and put you out into the street. I'll put you out of My family. You'll no longer be My son."

But that is not what Scripture says. Scripture says that what God has done will never be reversed. And not only that, Scripture tells us that by the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit God will cause us to walk in a way that is worthy of the name, "adopted son of God."

Jesus: Not Ashamed To Call Us Brethren

We find even more about this great guarantee in Hebrews chapter 2. We are going to be spending some time in the book of Hebrews later in this series, the Lord willing, but when we come to the book of Hebrews our focus is going to be

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 11 of 13

on the heavenly high priestly and intercessory work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But we also find in the book of Hebrews, in chapter 2, more about this great truth of our adoption as sons of God. Turn with me, if you are able, to Hebrews chapter 2, verse nine. Hebrews chapter 2, beginning at verse nine:

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, [notice] in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect [that is, to bring Him to the end goal of accomplishing their salvation] through sufferings.

For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason [notice] He [the Lord Jesus] is not ashamed to call them [is not ashamed to call us] brethren, saying: "I will declare Your name to [notice] My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You" and again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: [notice] Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."

Dear friends this is picture of the consummation of our adoption through Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation, is bringing many sons to glory. We who are in Christ are those sons, adopted sons of the living God, with all the rights and privileges of adopted sons.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 12 of 13

The writer to the Hebrews says that both He who sanctifies – the Lord Jesus Christ – and those who are being sanctified, we who are being set apart as God's adopted sons, are "all of one." And for this reason, the writer says, Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren. And we are told in this passage that the great day is coming when our Lord and Savior is going to present us before His Father, and He is going to say, "Father, here am I and the children" – the adopted brethren – "You have given Me."

How Can You Do Less Than To Look Above?

Dear friend, in view of these things, in view of this great doctrine of adoption, in view of the fact that we who have been raised with Christ are the adopted sons of God, how can you do anything less than to seek those things which are above, where Christ is, the One who has accomplished your adoption, sitting at the right hand of God the Father – your Father? How can you do anything less than to set your mind on things above, and not on things on the earth?

You died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. You died to this world. You are no longer a son of this world. You are the adopted son of God. Your life is hidden with Christ in God. And you have the great promise that when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory, and He will say to the Father on that great day, "Father, here am I and the children" – the adopted brethren – "You have given Me." And you will stand there with Christ, glorified forever.

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: Real vs. Counterfeit" (Colossians 3:1-4, Hebrews 2:9-13)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 1/12/2014

Page 13 of 13

Dear friends there is much more for us to see about this great doctrine of adoption. Tremendous truth. And so I hope you'll join us again as we continue our consideration of this great truth of God on our next program.

About the Broadcast

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