

Series: *Christ Preeminent In You*

Title: "Adoption: How Must Sons Live?" (Colossians 3:1-4, 1 Peter 2:11-12)

Speaker: Dr. Paul M. Elliott

Original Air Date: Week of 2/23/2014

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Today we are coming to the end of our series of messages on the glorious imperative that we find in Colossians chapter 3, verses one through four. If you are able to do so, I hope that you will turn to this passage in your Bible with me as we begin today. We are also going to be considering other related passages in the Word of God, and so I trust that if you are able to do so as you are listening that you will follow along in the Scriptures. So we begin in Colossians chapter 3, at verse one:

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, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

During this phase of our study of this tremendous passage, we have been focusing on the great fact that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, everyone who has been raised with Christ, has been given what the Scriptures call "adoption as sons." This is, as we have seen, because when we become Christians, when we are regenerated by the work of the Holy Spirit, God the Holy Spirit comes to live within us. And in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of adoption."

Adoption: Great Privilege, Great Responsibility

We have seen that this position, as the adopted sons of God, is a position of great privilege for the believer in Christ. It is because of this position that God the

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Father, who was once our condemning Judge, has now become our loving Father, has become the One whose throne of grace we may approach confidently, as we are told in Hebrews chapter 4, coming through the double intercession of Christ seated at His right hand, and the Holy Spirit living within us.

We have also seen that this position, as the adopted sons of God, is a position of great responsibility as well. We have seen that the keynote of that responsibility is that the adopted sons of God are to live lives of separation in this present evil world. That is the keynote of the Christian life. Holiness. Separation unto God, and separation from the world. Setting our minds on things above, as we read in Colossians chapter 3, and not on things on the earth.

And so we have been considering the question: How are we to do that? How are the adopted sons of God to live in this present world? How must we do it? What is it that will please our Father? In our last message I called attention to the words of the Apostle Paul at the beginning of Second Corinthians chapter 7, where he says this:

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

We have seen that the phrase that is translated "perfecting holiness" means literally "making holiness your goal" – making separation toward our holy God and separation from the world of sin your objective in life. How, then, is the

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adopted son of God to do this? How are we to set our minds on things above, and not on things on the earth?

How Must Adopted Sons Live?

In our last message I submitted to you that the answer is fourfold. We saw first of all that we must live in view of the *destiny* that God has ordained for us. Romans chapter 8 verse 30 speaks of that destiny as being glorified with Christ. This is the same thought that we find in Colossians chapter 3, verse four, that "when Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." We must live life in this world in the light of that glorious fact.

Secondly, we saw that we must live life in this present world in obedience to the *boundary* that God has placed around us. We saw that the boundary is clearly delineated for us in Second Corinthians chapter 6 beginning in verse 14, where we read this:

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial [or Satan, literally, "the worthless one"]? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?

The boundary is that we are not to make common cause with the world in its sinfulness, nor are we to make common cause with false religion.

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And thirdly, the adopted sons of God must live life in this present world in the light of the *dwelling place* that God has taken up within us. Under the New Covenant, God no longer dwells in the Holy of Holies of a tabernacle or a temple made with human hands. God's dwelling place on earth is no longer in a physical land.

"You," the Apostle Paul declares in Second Corinthians chapter 6 – you the adopted sons of God – "you are the temple of the living God." The adopted sons of God must live in continual consciousness of the dwelling place that God has taken up within us. And so the Apostle Paul commands the Ephesian church, in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 30:

... do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

And so we, as the adopted sons of God, are to live in the light of the destiny God has ordained for us – a destiny of glory, that is far, far different from the destiny of spiritual death and damnation that awaits unbelievers. And we, as the adopted sons of God, are to carefully observe God's boundary of not making common cause with unbelievers.

We, as the adopted sons of God, are to live life in this present world in continual consciousness of the fact that we are God's dwelling place, that God the Holy Spirit is living within us, is ever present with us, wherever we go, whatever we do, whatever we think. Every bit of it is intimately known to the omniscient God who

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dwells within us. And so the Apostle Paul says, First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19:

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

The price of our adoption as sons of God was the price of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so Peter also tells us, in his first epistle, in chapter 1, beginning at verse 18:

... knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Living In Light of God's Promised Inheritance

And this brings us to our final point in answer to the question, "How are the adopted sons of God to live in this present evil world?" The final part of the answer is this: We must live not only in the light of the destiny God has ordained for us, not only in the light of the boundary God has placed around us, not only in

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the light of the dwelling place that God has taken up within us, but also, finally, we must live in light of the *promise* God has given us. And that promise, is the promise of a glorious and eternal inheritance.

We must be separated from the world, and separated unto God, no matter what the cost may seem to be, because of the promises of God to His adopted sons, which He has purchased for us at the price of the blood of His only begotten Son. Dear friend, listen to me carefully: Spiritual separation is not a position of deprivation. There is great reward and great blessing in separation unto God, and spiritual separation from this present evil world.

Dear friend, the life that you are now living in this present world, is, as the Scriptures tell us, "but for a moment" in comparison to eternity yet to come in the New Heavens and New Earth. In the life to come, our adoption as sons means a secure inheritance, a new citizenship, a new body, and much more.

Now, as we consider this point, let me remind you once again of the picture of the "adoption as sons" that is given for us in the New Testament. It is a picture or an illustration based on the law of adoption in the Roman Empire that existed in the time of the New Testament.

Riches In Christ

Under the Roman law that Paul used as his metaphor, under that law the adopted son was given the right to the father's property. He was given an

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inheritance. The father's property was his by right of adoption. And that is true for us. We have an inheritance. Our inheritance is our Father's property – all the riches that are in Christ Jesus – the spiritual riches of life in Him now, and the riches of the New Heavens and the New Earth in the life to come. And the Holy Spirit, Ephesians chapter 1 tells us, is the guarantee or the down payment of that inheritance. Ephesians chapter 1, verse 13 tells us that those who have trusted in Christ

were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory [that is, Christ's glory].

And so, earlier in his letter to the Colossians, in the first chapter beginning at verse nine, the Apostle Paul writes that he does not cease to pray for the Colossian believers,

...that you may be filled with the knowledge of His [that is God's] will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and long-suffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has [notice] qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness [He has positionally

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separated us] and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

A New Citizenship

Not only do we have a rich inheritance in Christ, we also have a new citizenship. We have been delivered from the power of darkness, and conveyed into the kingdom of God's only begotten Son.

The act of adoption, in Paul's inspired metaphor, also meant that the adopted son held the same citizenship as the father. And we are told that "our citizenship is in Heaven." We not only, as we have seen in previous messages, have a new name and a new family relationship, we also have a new citizenship.

We are no longer citizens of the world that is going to perish. We are now aliens here. We are citizens of the new world to come. We have the rights of Heavenly citizenship, and we have the responsibility to live like citizens of our Father's kingdom while we are in this present world which is now alien to us, and we to it. And so Peter says in his first epistle, in chapter 2 verse 11:

Beloved, I beg you [notice] as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles [that is among the unsaved], that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation [that is, that they may

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glorify God when God brings any of them to faith in Christ because of your witness] (1 Peter 2:11-12).

Dear friend, if you are a believer on the Lord Jesus Christ, then you are a citizen of the world to come. You have a responsibility to abstain from the fleshly lusts of this present sinful world that war against the soul. You have a responsibility to conduct yourself honorably before God your Father among unbelievers. You have a responsibility to do that as a witness before them, so that if God should will to do so, He may use your separated conduct as a witness to bring people to Christ.

That has happened many times. Many times those who hated and reviled Christians because of their separated lives, those same people, when they were regenerated by the Spirit of God and became adopted sons of God themselves, they glorified God because of the witness that believers had lived out before them, living no longer as citizens of this present world, but living as citizens of the world to come. That is your responsibility as an adopted son of God, to live in such a way that God may use your life, as a testimony of what faith in Christ brings about, the new life that you have in Christ as an adopted son of God.

To Be Like Christ

And so we have seen that as the adopted sons of God, in order to live life in a separated and holy way in this present world, we need to be conscious of the fact that we have a glorious inheritance in Christ Jesus.

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And Scripture also tells us one more thing of which we must be constantly conscious as we seek to live lives that are separated unto God and separated from the world. We find this glorious fact in the epistles of Paul, and we also find it in the glorious words of First John chapter 3, beginning at verse one. Turn there with me if you are able, First John chapter 3 beginning at verse one:

Behold what matter of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He [Jesus] is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him [in Christ] purifies himself, just as He [Jesus] is pure.

We shall be like Him! Finally, gloriously, the day will come when we see Jesus Christ face-to-face, and we shall be like Him! The image of God that was marred almost beyond recognition at the fall of our first parents, shall be restored, and even more! We shall be like the Lord Jesus Christ! We shall behold Him face-to-face, and we shall be like Him, glorified forever. Sons of God forever. Home in the Father's house forever. Living for evermore in a new universe where we will not be subject either to the power or the presence of sin and death.

Perfect, glorified bodies in His likeness. Partaking with Him in the untold glories of the New Heavens and New Earth forever. Dear friend, you as an

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adopted son of God the Father, you as the blood-bought, redeemed child of God, you must live in this present world in the light of these things – separated from this present world, and separated unto God. And the ultimate and glorious reason why you must do this is because of the promise that as the adopted son of God you shall be like the Lord Jesus Christ for eternity.

And how will this come about? The Apostle Paul tells us in First Corinthians chapter 15. Turn there with me if you are able please, First Corinthians chapter 15, beginning at verse 50:

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

"O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

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Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 15:50-58)

Who Else Do You Have But Your Great God?

Dear friend, because these things are true, the Apostle John tells us that "everyone who has this hope in Him [in Jesus Christ – everyone who has this hope of the future glorious inheritance in Christ] purifies himself, just as He [Jesus] is pure" (1st John 3:3).

Because we are the adopted sons of God, we need to live like it. Not that this saves us, not that this keeps us saved. Our salvation is all of Christ and nothing of us. But we need to understand what is ours because we are now the adopted sons of God. We need to rejoice in it. And we need to live in it, and live in the light of it.

Because these things are true, we can say with the psalmist, in Psalm 73 verse 25, Lord, "Whom have I in Heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You."

Because these things are true, we need to be purifying ourselves from the things of this world and of this sinful flesh, and turning our hearts more and more toward our loving Heavenly Father and our great Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, living in this world by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Doing all things through Christ, our elder brother, who strengthens us.

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May the Lord give us His grace and His power to live in that hope, purifying ourselves, by the power of the Holy Spirit, until the day when we see Him face-to-face, and we shall be like our Savior for evermore.

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