

The Ordo Salutis

The Order of Salvation

Step 10- Adoption

As of 02/27/22

“Nobody is born into this world a child of the family of God. We are born as children of wrath. The only way we enter into the family of God is by adoption, and that adoption occurs when we are united to God’s only begotten Son by faith. When by faith we are united with Christ, we are then adopted into that family of whom Christ is the firstborn.” - RC Sproul

“Who is to have authority in the matter of gracious adoption? The children of wrath? Surely not; and yet all men are such! No, it stands to reason, to common sense, that none but the parent can have the discretion to adopt.” ~ Charles Spurgeon

“The spirit of prayer is the fruit and token of the Spirit of adoption.” ~ John Newton

“Adoption is a greater mercy than Adam had in paradise.” ~ Thomas Watson

“The Gospel is not a picture of adoption, adoption is a picture of the Gospel.” ~ John Piper

“Before orphans can enjoy the love and care of a new family, they must be legally adopted. Adoption, like justification, is simultaneously legal and relational”- Michael Horton

“Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption. . . . Of all the gifts of grace, adoption is the highest”.- JI Packer

“What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as Father.”- JI Packer

“The term ‘adoption’ (used here in older English versions [of Romans 12:15] may have a somewhat artificial sound in our ears; but in the Roman world of the first century AD an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature, and might well enjoy the father’s affection more fully and reproduce the father’s character more worthily.”- FF Bruce

“Adoption gives us the privilege of sons because regeneration is the nature of sons.”- Stephen Charnock

“God’s Holy Spirit confirms the validity of our adoption, not by some inner, mystical voice, but by the fruit He produces (Gal. 5:22-23) and the power He provides for spiritual service (Ac. 1:8).”- John MacArthur

“Who is to have authority in the matter of gracious adoption? The children of wrath? Surely not; and yet all men are such! No, it stands to reason, to common sense, that none but the parent can have the discretion to adopt.”- CH Spurgeon

“Since God has a Son of his own, and such a Son, how wonderful God’s love in adopting us! We needed a Father, but He did not need sons.”- Thomas Watson

Definition of Adoption

Adoption is the admission of a believer into the Family of God, positionally, as sons and daughters. Adoption is the sovereign Act of God that immediately follows “Justification”.

But while we greatly benefit from Adoption- we do NOT cooperate with God in our own Adoption.

Adoption was God’s Plan from the Beginning

Romans 8:14-25

14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

15 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!"

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

19 For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God.

20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope

21 that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

22 For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now.

23 And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

24 For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees?

25 But if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.

Ephesians 1:3-6a

3 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,

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

6 to the praise of the glory of His grace...

Adoption is NOT taught often nor very well

Now, normally, people, who say they believe in Adoption will say something like, “*Adoption brings us into the Family of God.*” And that’s true- but that is usually the end of the discussion. Why is there not more Teaching about this important subject? So, in this Study we want to explore several Questions:

- What exactly does it mean for God to adopt us and bring us into His Family?
- What are the Benefits to us and the Responsibilities we must live under now that we are a part of God’s Family?
- Is the “Family of God” the same thing as the “Church?”

Here in **Ephesians 1:4b&5**- the Apostle Paul taught that God *predestined* us to Adoption. And the practical application of that Truth is that Adoption was NOT some afterthought- nor some Effort by God to correct the Problem of Mankind having fallen through the rebellion of Adam. Instead, the Bible teaches that Adoption was God’s fore-ordained Plan from the very beginning. So, before God created anything- He decreed that guilty sinners would be graciously brought into His Family by what He alone did for them.

Galatians 4:1-7

1 Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything,

2 but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father.

3 So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world.

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

The biblical Foundation for the Act of adopting children is *primarily* in the New Testament rather than the Old. There are only three Adoptions mentioned in the entire Old Testament (Moses, Esther, Mephibosheth **2Samuel 9**; and Genubath **1Kings 11:20**). But Israel was also called “God’s son” (**Exodus 4:22**; **Deuteronomy 14:1**; **32:6**; **Jeremiah 31:9**; and **Hosea 11:1**) but it isn’t until the New Testament that this is called and Adoption.

The Foundation of Adoption

The deepest and strongest Foundation for Adoption is not located in the Act of humans adopting other humans- but in God adopting humans. And while this Act is *not* part of His ordinary Providence in the world- it is at the very Heart of the Gospel.

Galatians 4:4&5 is as central a Gospel Statement as there is anywhere in the Bible:

**4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,
5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.**

Now God did not have to use the Concept of Adoption to explain how He saved us, or even how we become part of His Family- but He did. God could have stayed with the language of New Birth so that all His children were described as children by nature only:

John 1:12&13

**12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,
13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**

John 1:12&13

**12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—
13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (NIV)**

So, God chose to speak of us as *adopted* as well as being children by the *New Birth*. And this is the most *essential* Foundation of the Practice of natural Adoption today.

Eight Similarities

What I would like to do is lay out eight similarities between what God did in Adoption and what happens in a Christian Adoption today. I pray that whether you have adopted, or are engaged in assisting Adoptions, or are pondering an Adoption, God will use these comparisons to heighten your Confidence that God is graciously involved in our Adoptions. He has done it Himself. He knows what it costs. And He stands ready to support us all the way to the end.

1. Adoption was (for God) and is (for us) *costly*.

Galatians 4:4b&5

**4 ...when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,
5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.**

Now to redeem something means: to obtain; or to set free by paying a price. What was the Price that God paid for our Liberation and Adoption?

Galatians 3:13&14

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO HANGS ON A TREE"—

14 in order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

... so, Adoption cost God the Price of His dear Son's Life.

Now there are always huge Costs in adopting children. Some are financial; some are emotional. There are Costs in time and stress for the rest of your life. Once you have children—either naturally or through Adoption— you never stop being a Parent till you die. And the Stresses of caring about adult children can be as great, or greater, than the stresses of caring for young children. There is something very deep and right about the Embrace of this Cost for the Life of a child!

Few things bring me more Satisfaction than seeing young believers voluntarily enter into a Culture of Adoption. Because that means that these Parents are looking to their heavenly Father for their Joy rather than rejecting the Stress and Cost of children in order to maximize their own Freedom and Comforts. When people embrace the Pain and the Joy of children rather than using Abortion or Birth Control simply to keep children away— the Worth of Christ shines more visibly. Adoption is as far away as possible from the sinful mindset of this pagan world that rejects children as being “an Intrusion.” Praise God for people ready to embrace the Suffering— known and unknown. But God's Cost to adopt us was infinitely greater than any Cost we might endure in adopting and raising children.

2. Adoption did (for God) and does (for us) involve *the legal status* of the child.

Galatians 4:4-6

4 But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law,

5 so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

In our Adoption— there were “Legal Realities” God had to deal with. His Own Justice and Law *demand*ed that we be punished and excluded from His Presence for the Guilt of our Sins. Righteousness was *required* and Punishment *demand*ed. God had to satisfy His Own Justice and His Law in order to adopt sinners into His Family. And He did this through the Life, Death, and Resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ.

This means that the Status of being a “son” legally *preceded* the experience of the Spirit coming to give us the Affections of sons. We are *legally* sons *before* we experience the Joy of “sonship”. The objective Work of our Salvation (two thousand years ago at Calvary) precedes and grounds the subjective Experience of our Salvation by the Spirit today.

And so it is with our adopting children today: The legal Transactions *precede* and *undergird* the growth of family Feelings. If the legal “red tape” seems long and hard, keep in mind that this tape is not yet red with your blood, but Jesus satisfied all the legal Demands precisely by shedding His Blood.

3. Adoption was blessed and is blessed with God’s pouring out a *Spirit of sonship*.

Galatians 4:6

Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!”

Romans 8:15-17

15 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!”

16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

God does not leave us in the Condition of being aliens when He adopts us. He does not leave us with no feelings of Acceptance and Love. Rather, He pours His Spirit into our hearts to give us the experience of being embraced in the Family. And what is remarkable about these two texts is the term, “*Abba*.” This is an Aramaic word. So, why does Paul use it, transliterated, in these two letters (**Romans** and **Galatians**) written in Greek?

The Answer is that it was the way Jesus spoke to His Father, in spite of the fact that virtually no one in Jewish Culture referred to God with this endearing word, “*Abba*.” It stunned the disciples. They held onto it as a precious Remnant of the very Voice of Jesus in the language He spoke.

In **Mark 14:36**, Jesus is in Gethsemane and prays, “*Abba, Father*, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” Therefore, in adopting us, God give us the very Spirit of his Son and grants us to feel the affections of belonging to the very family of God.

In the mercy of God, in our families God works to awaken affections in adopted children for their parents that are far more than legal outcomes. They are deeply personal and spiritual bonds. Adopted children do not *infer* that they are our children by checking out the adoption papers. A spirit pervades our relationship that bears witness to this reality. Like the other children in the family, they all cry, “Daddy.”

Praise God that he give us *both* legal standing as his children *and* the very Spirit of his Son so that we find ourselves saying from a heart of deep conviction, “*Abba, Father*.”

4. Adoption was (for God) and is (for us) marked by *moral transformation through the Spirit*.

All who are *led by the Spirit* of God are sons of God.” (Romans 8:14)

God does not leave his children without help to bear the moral image of the family. We may trust that his help will be there for our children as we bring them under the means of grace that God uses to awaken and transform his children.

5. Adoption brought us, and brings our children, the rights of being *heirs of the Father*.

Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then *an heir through God*. ([Galatians 4:6-7](#)) The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, *then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ*, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also *be glorified with him*. ([Romans 8:16-17](#))

Notice that [Galatians 4:7](#) says we are heirs “through God” and [Romans 8:17](#) says we are heirs “of God.” In Galatians, the context is the promise of Abraham—through God, that is, by his sending his Son to redeem us, we are heirs with Abraham (even though many of us are Gentiles!) of his inheritance, namely the *world* ([Romans 4:13](#)). But in [Romans 8:17](#), the context is that we, with Christ, are heirs of all that God has, namely, everything. “All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” ([1 Corinthians 3:21](#)).

Just before we left for England on sabbatical, Noël and I went to a lawyer and updated our wills. All the boys are married, and Talitha is the only legal “dependent.” A lot had changed since the last time we made wills. This was a reminder to us that she will inherit like the sons. She is not in a lesser adoptive class. All inherit together. That is the way God did it. That is the way we do it.

6. Adoption was (for God) and is (for us) seriously *planned*.

He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love *he predestined us for adoption* as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ([Ephesians 1:4-6](#))

Adoption in God’s mind was not Plan B. He predestined us for adoption before the creation of the world. Plan A was not lots of children who never sin and never need to be redeemed. Plan A was creation, fall, redemption, adoption so that the full range of God’s glory and mercy and grace could be known by his adopted children. Adoption was not second best. It was planned from the beginning.

In our lives, there is something uniquely precious about having children by birth. That is a good plan. There is also something different, but also uniquely precious, about adopting children. Each has its own uniqueness. Your choice to adopt children may be sequentially second. But does not have to be *secondary*. It can be as precious and significant as having children by birth. God is able to make adoption and A+ plan in our lives.

7. Adoption was (for God) and often is now (for us) *from very bad situations*.

We . . . were by nature *children of wrath*, like the rest of mankind. ([Ephesians 2:3](#))

God did not find us like an abandoned foundling bundled on the front step and irresistibly cute. He found us ugly and evil and rebellious. We were not attractive. We would not be easy children to deal with. And, what’s worse, God himself was angry with us. He hates sin and rebellion. We were then doubly “children of wrath.”

These are the ones God pursued in adoption. Therefore, all of God’s adoptions crossed a greater moral and cultural divide than any of our adoptions could. The distance between what we are, and what God is, is infinitely greater than any distance between us and a child we might adopt. God crossed the greatest cultural barrier to redeem and adopt us.

Consider too, that according to [Romans 9:4](#), the people that God chose in the Old Testament, the Israelites, were adopted out of a terrible situation. “*They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises.*” But how was this adoption effected? [Hosea 11:1](#), “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and *out of Egypt I called my son.*” They were slaves in Egypt. But not only that, they were often also rebellious against God. “Our fathers, when they were in Egypt, did not consider your wondrous works; they did not remember the abundance of your steadfast love, but rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea” ([Psalm 106:7](#)).

Therefore, God went and took a son from Egypt who was both enslaved and rebellious. The pattern is set: adoptions do not just come from nice, healthy, safe, auspicious situations.

8. Adoption meant (for all Christians) and means (for Christian parents) that *we suffer now and experience glory later.*

The whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, *groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.* ([Romans 8:22-23](#))

This strikes us as strange. Aren’t we already adopted? Why does Paul say that we are “waiting for our adoption”? Yes, we are already adopted. When Christ died for us, the price was paid, and when we trust him, we are legally and permanently in the family. But God’s purpose for adoption is not to leave any of his children in a state of groaning and suffering. He raised Jesus from the dead with a new body, and he promises that part of our adoption will be a new resurrection body with no more disabilities and no more groaning. Therefore, what we wait for is the *full experience* of our adoption—the resurrection of our bodies.

There is much groaning in the path of adoption on the way to full salvation. But the outcome is glorious. It is worth it all. “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us” ([Romans 8:18](#)).

This is especially relevant for parents of children with disabilities. They know the “groaning” of this life. All of us have children with some sort of disability, and some of us will live to get very old and watch our children age and die before we do. Others will see their children struck down in war or by accident or disease. Others will care for a disabled child till one of them dies. All of this groaning is groaning in hope because we are adopted by God and destined for a resurrection and an eternal future of health and wholeness and joy. It will be worth it all.

... to be continued

