

BECOMING A CHILD OF GOD

What adoption is

John 1:12

This truth in the heart

Ephesians 1:3

Practical effect in our lives

1 John 3:3

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THINK ON THESE THINGS

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ADOPTION

To those who receive Christ and believe in His name, God gives the authority to become the children of God. It gives them a position or standing which they did not have by any natural right. Believers have this awesome privilege by the authority of the almighty, eternal and unchangeable God.

It is one of the "things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God." *Col 3:1* and also one of the "spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ." *Eph 1:3*. It is as unchangeable, irrevocable, eternal and unshakable as the throne of God.

We become sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, (*Gal 3:26*). This is called adoption in *Gal 4:5-7* (NKJV) or full rights as sons (NIV). In *Rom 8:15* believers are described as having received the Spirit of adoption.

Those who receive Christ and believe in His name have this blessing now as a present possession in heaven. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God" *1 John 3:2* and there will be a full manifestation in the future (*Rom 8:23*).

The way in which adoption comes about is described in *John 1:11,12*:

He came unto his own, and his own did not receive him. But as many as received him, to them gave he right to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.

The gospel was to be preached first of all to the Jews (*Rom 1:16*) and in accordance with God's purpose He came to His own, the Jewish people. The Jews were expecting an earthly messianic kingdom for the glory of Israel among the nations, and deliverance for Israel from their Roman conquerors. But Jesus showed no interest at all in setting up an earthly kingdom.

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe the gospel. *Mark 1:14,15*

He preached the kingdom of God. This was a spiritual kingdom, not

of this world, (John 18:36). It was not what they wanted and therefore they did not receive Him.

WHAT IT MEANS TO RECEIVE CHRIST

Human responsibility is fully involved:

"But as many as received Him...." *John 1:12*

"Whoever will may come." *Rev 22:17, John 3:15,16*

Receiving Him involves a number of responses involving acts of the will on our part. The first of these is repentance. He came to call sinners to repentance, (Mark 2:17). Just before He ascended to heaven Jesus told His disciples.....

"that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." *Luke 24:47*

The apostle Paul described the gospel message to both Jews and Gentiles "that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance." *Acts 26:20*

When he was imprisoned in Rome many came to Paul and his message to them is summarised as "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." *Acts 20:21*

Without faith it is impossible to please God:

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. *John 3:16*

He who believes on the Son has everlasting life: and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on him. *John 3:36*

who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. *John 14:21*

And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. *1 Tim 1:14*

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day *2 Tim 1:12*

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right (*exousia**) to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. *John 1:12*

**exousia* ἐξουσία, authority or right

(not δυνάμις *dunamis*, doo'-nam-is power, ability)

Authority, is to be distinguished from power (KJV) in the sense of ability.

Adoption is by brought into effect by the authority of God in heaven.

"Authority that flows from His throne unto His own."

ADOPTION AND THE NEW BIRTH

We cannot have any one aspect of salvation without all the others. However, there are different aspects of salvation and it helps our understanding to distinguish clearly between them. It is also important for instance, to distinguish between justification and sanctification. Those who do not do so, leave themselves open to the universal error of salvation by works.

The difference between adoption and the new birth may be seen in a number of respects:

- God gives us the authority to be called the children of God, but it is not at all appropriate to think of God giving us authority to be born again, for that is the sovereign prerogative of the Holy Spirit. *John 3:8* and *John 1:13*. (God gives those who have been born again the ability and power to live the new life in Christ, but that is not under consideration here.)
- The new birth takes place within us here on earth, but adoption is brought into effect by the authority of God in heaven.

Adoption takes place as a result of receiving Christ and this involves a number of definite choices. These are acts of the will of man, including repentance, faith, commitment, love and obedience. They are not acts of the will of the flesh, but acts of a will that has been set free from the bondage of fallen human nature by the new birth. *John 1:13* states that the new birth is independent of the will of man..

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children" *Rom 8:16*

The Holy Spirit bears witness to us of adoption or sonship. It carries with it the awesome privilege of being heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. [Rom 8:15-17](#), [Eph 1:13,14](#)

BEHOLD WHAT MANNER OF LOVE

In 1 John 3:11 believers are called upon to take very careful notice of the greatness and the special kind of love which God has bestowed upon us that we should be called the children of God. The greatness of that love is seen in the fact that God gave His only Son to die on the cross for our sins. He did not spare His own Son. (Rom 8:32, John 3:16, Rom 5:8)

THE SPECIAL KIND OF LOVE

The plan of adoption originated through the supreme love of the Father for His eternal Son.

- The children of God were given by the Father to the Son out of His great love for Him, before the foundation of the world. (Heb 2:13; Is 8:18; John 10:29, John 17:2, John 17:6, John 17:9-12, John 17:24)
- The Father loves the Son because He always does those things which please Him and because He laid down His life for the sheep. (John 10:15,17; John 17:4)
- The Son loves them because the Father gave them to Him. He loved them and gave Himself for them. (Gal 2:20)
- He progressively cleanses and transforms them into His own image. (Eph 5:25; Rev 1:5,6)
- He sees the travail of His soul and is satisfied. (Is 53:11)
- He delights to call them His brethren, reveal the Father to them, sing praises to God in the midst of them and rejoices to proclaim, "Here am I and the children whom God has given me." (Heb 2:12,13)

ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED

Before the fall, God loved Adam and Eve directly for themselves. They were able to stand before God in their own merits and by their

own obedience. That is not our situation in any sense. We stand accepted not in our merits but on the ground of Christ's righteousness alone. We stand accepted in the place that none but Christ could claim.

God's love to us is a special kind of love which does not come to us directly, but through the one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ (1 Tim 2:5). It comes to us only in virtue of relationship to Jesus Christ (John 17:26).

*"No longer far from Him, but now
by precious blood made nigh,
accepted in the well beloved,
near to God's heart we lie."*

For the sake of illustration imagine a fairy tale prince of long ago (and a culture which few of us would approve of today):

Suppose the prince falls in love with a woman who is a commoner, marries her and brings her into the royal family. The king has his reservations about the situation, but being a good father-in-law, he fully accepts the new wife for the sake of his son. Suppose also that the woman really loves the prince, and while considering all the wonderful privileges, riches, etc. which she now has, her greatest joy is that it all comes to her through the one she loves.

We Christians have a far greater joy.

*Oh, I am my beloved's
and my beloved's mine.
He brings a poor vile sinner
into His house of wine;
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
not e'en where glory dwelleth
in Emanuel's land*

*The bride eyes not her blessings
but her dear bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze at glory
but on my king of grace,
not at the crown He giveth,
but on His pierced hand;
the Lamb is all the glory
of Emanuel's land.*

(Ann R. Cousin)

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

We do well to study this great truth of adoption carefully and thoroughly from the Scripture, and meditate upon it so that it goes right down into our hearts bringing forth the response of love, worship, praise and thanksgiving. When we do this, we will find it to have a vital practical effect, for it is one of the great sanctifying truths of the gospel ([John 17:17](#)).

In [Phil 2:15](#) we are told that "the children of God" should be harmless and blameless etc. In [Eph 5:1](#) "...be followers of God as dear children."

The following passage gives a list of things the children of God do not do, together with the warning that those who practise such things have no inheritance in the kingdom of God. ([Eph 5:2-14](#)). (See also [Matt 5:48](#), [Luke 6:36](#))

In [1 John 3:1-3](#) it is linked with the coming of Christ and being like 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 is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

Notice that some of the passages which speak of adoption occur in a context of warnings against continuing in sin:

- Just prior to the above passage, there is the warning about being ashamed before Him at His coming and the importance of practising righteousness ([1 John 2:28,29](#)). The passage immediately following deals with the same subject ([1 John 3:4-15](#)).
- In [Rom 8:12-17](#), a passage concerning adoption, there is both warning and encouragement: "if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

How we need to have this great truth of adoption burning strong within our hearts, to bring forth the fruit of love, worship, praise and practical sanctification. Let us rejoice in the authority "that flows from

His throne unto His own."

*With such a blessed hope in view,
we would more holy be,
more like our risen glorious Lord
whose face we soon shall see.*

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

1. **Gal 3:26** For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.
2. **Rom 8:15** For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.
3. **Rom 8:23** And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *that is to say*, the redemption of our body.
4. **Rom 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
5. **Rev 22:17** And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is thirsts come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.
6. **John 3:15,16** That whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
7. **John 3:8** “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”
8. **John 1:13** who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
9. **Rom 8:15-17** For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷and if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.
10. **Eph 1:13,14** In whom you also have *trusted*, after that you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴Which is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.
11. **1 John 3:1** Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know him.
12. **Rom 8:32** He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

13. **John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
14. **Rom 5:8** But God showed his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
15. **Heb 2:13** And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God has given me.
16. **Is 8:18** Behold, I and the children whom the LORD has given me *are* for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells in mount Zion.
17. **John 10:29** My Father, who gave *them to* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.
18. **John 17:2** As you have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him.
19. **John 17:6** I have manifested your name unto the men which you gave me out of the world: they were yours, and you gave them me; and they have kept your word.
20. **John 17:9-12** I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which you have given me; for they are yours. And all mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I am glorified in them.
And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given to me, that they may be one, as we *are*. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name: those that you gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.
21. **John 17:24** Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me: for you loved me before the foundation of the world.
22. **John 10:15,17** As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁷Therefore my Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.
23. **John 17:4** I have glorified you on the earth: I have finished the work which you gave me to do.
24. **Gal 2:20** I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.
25. **Eph 5:25** Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;
26. **Rev 1:5,6** And from Jesus Christ, *who is* the faithful witness, *and* the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, ⁶And made

us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

27. **Is 53:11** He shall see of the travail of his soul, *and* shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.
28. **Heb 2:12,13** Saying, I will declare your name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise to you. ¹³And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God has given me.
29. **1 Tim 2:5** For *there is* one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;
30. **John 17:26** And I have declared unto them your name, and will declare *it*: that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.
31. **John 17:17** Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth. ¹⁸As you have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.
32. **Eph 5:2-14** And walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.
³But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becomes saints; ⁴Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. ⁵For this you know, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. ⁶Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the children of disobedience. ⁷Therefore do not be partakers with them. ⁸For you were once in darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord: walk as children of light: ⁹(For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) ¹⁰Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. ¹¹And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*. ¹²For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. ¹³But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatever makes manifest is light. ¹⁴Therefore he says, Awake you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.
33. **Matt 5:48** Be perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.
34. **Luke 6:36** Be merciful, as your Father also is merciful.
35. **1 John 2:28,29** And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. ²⁹If you know that he is righteous, you know that every one that does righteousness is born of him.
36. **1 John 3:4-15** Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. ⁵And you know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. ⁶Whoever abides in him does not

sin: whoever sins has not seen him, or known him. ⁷Little children, let no man deceive you: he that does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. ⁸He that commits sin is of the devil; for the devil sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹Whoever is born of God does not commit sin; for his seed remains in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, neither he that does not love his brother.

¹¹For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. ¹²Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And why did he slay him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. ¹³Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hates you.

¹⁴We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that does not love *his* brother abides in death. ¹⁵Whoever hates his brother is a murderer: and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.