

ADOPTION

"As we study the writings of Paul we come upon picture after picture of what Jesus Christ has done for man." William Barclay

At the very front of Paul's thought was the fact that Jesus Christ brought to men a knowledge of God that without Him they could not possess.

John 14:9 "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" was a primary and essential part of what Paul believed and taught. Jesus came to show us what God is like.

It is not such much that Jesus came to reveal the Father, write a book or preach a sermon or lecture on what God is like, its as if Paul is saying "Look at Jesus and you will see what God is." It wasn't enough to show what God is like, Jesus came to open the way to God for men, to give men access to God.

Also keep in mind that until Jesus came into the world, men had a wrong idea of God. God was a task-master, the lawgiver, and a judge who was bent on the destruction of the sinner. Clearly men who hold this idea have but one response: run from God to escape His wrath.

The word that Paul uses for access is *prosagego* and it connected to the word *prosagein*. In the Greek version of the OT this word is used to describe bringing someone to God that they may be ordained as priests. (Exodus 29:4). This is a term that even the heathen world would understand.

The coming of Jesus showed God in a new light. Through the life of Christ we see God as the lover of the souls of men, as a God who is seeking love, a God whose desire it is to forgive and gather all men to Himself. He gave us direct access to the very throne of God and it made it possible for men to cast themselves on the love of God instead of fleeing forever the wrath of God.

Throughout his writings Paul uses several metaphors to describe the work of Christ. Metaphors that people would understand because they were pictures from everyday life.

JUSTIFICATION A metaphor from the **courts**. We have been made right in the eyes of God. The just-as-if-I-never-sinned argument tends to white-wash the fact that we have sinned and we do need to be justified in the eyes of God. In the parable of the lost son listeners would automatically assume the father would punish the son. To everyone's amazement it's not what happened. We find the son is restored not to the status of a **servant** but to the status of a **son** with all the privileges. Jesus did not put a Band-Aid on us. We were made right in the eyes of God.

RECONCILIATION A metaphor from **friendship**. The idea is the restoration of a lost relationship.

2 Cor 5:18: "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ . . . "

Romans 5:10 "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."

A relationship of love and intimacy has replaced a relationship of fear and distance. Man was **reconciled to** God. Why?

REDEMPTION A metaphor from **slavery**. Possible that most of the Church's members were or at one time had been slaves. There is a picture in the word of being bought with a price.

- **Hebrew background.** To the Jews the idea of redemption was bound up with the thought of the emancipation of the people from Egypt. Liberation from slavery in Egypt was the supreme event in their history.

Exodus 6:6 "I am the LORD . . . I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments."

Deut 15:15 "You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you . . . "

This a metaphor of liberty regained by the intervention of God.

- **Greek background.** A slave could buy his freedom. Deposited what little he did earn in the temple of some god. When he accumulated enough to purchase his freedom he would hand the money over to the priest who would pay the master; the result was the man became free from all men and became the possession of the god who, it was held, had paid his price.

It is that picture Paul has in mind when he writes;

1Cor 6:20 "You are bought with a price."

1Cor 7:23 "You are bought with a price; do not become slaves of men."

ADOPTION A metaphor taken from **family life**. The Greek word rendered "adoption" appears only 5 times in scripture and only in Paul's writings.

Rom 8:14-15 *"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 Abba, Father."*

Rom 8:23 *". . . even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."*

Gal 4:4-7 " 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, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our 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."

Eph 1:5 " . . . having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will."

In the Greek the word adoption literally means placing as a son .

Regeneration has to do with our change in nature, justification our change standing, sanctification our change in character, adoption our change in position. The word is used of all believers when the question of rights, position and privilege are used.

Adoption was carried out for three main reasons:

- ensure the continuation of the family and family name
- ensure there was someone to pass the family estate too
- ensure that the worship of the family and ancestral gods would continue

Among the Jews adoption was not a common practice and when it did occur there were no special legal ceremonies.

Among the Greeks the practice was common and had an elaborate process.

- Could only be carried out by persons able to make a will
- Must be a Greek citizen
- Could not be guilty of anything which affected his citizenship or his legal status
- Could not have a legitimate son

The result was the adopted person lost all rights in his old family and gained all the rights in his new family. If legitimate children were born later the adoptee still received full the inheritance due him.

The Roman adoption is what Paul had in mind.

Patria Potestas - the law of the fathers power. The father had absolute power over his children.

The adoption was in two stages:

- First there was a public denial of the old gods and a public acceptance of the new gods.
- Second there followed a process by which a full legal bill was presented before the Roman Assembly to be argued and voted on. Literally a court case.

The results of the adoption were:

- the adopted son gained a new father
- the adopted son lost all rights in his old family and completely gained all rights in his new family
- All debts and the obligations in his former life were completely cancelled
- If the adopted had children these also became adopted.

It was of all this that Paul had in mind when he spoke of the adoption of the Christian into the family of God.

- The Christian receives a new Father - God
- he becomes a full inheritor of the grace and the wealth of the riches of God.
- his past life is cancelled, all of his sin debt is cancelled
- The promise is passed to his children - they are not saved through the father

If we think of religion in terms of the law, and the Christian as being under obligation to keep the law, then the relationship of the Christian to God will always be that of slave to master, criminal to judge and distance and fear. However, bring the idea of adoption into the picture and God becomes Father, we become the child and religion becomes not a struggle to keep an impossible law, but the joy of undeserved entry into the family of God.

PRIVILEGES OF ADOPTION.

PRAYER - One of the greatest privileges of our adoption is being able to speak directly to God. "We are no longer slaves, but sons" (Gal 4:7). It is in the context of this relationship with God as our Father that we are to understand the prayer Jesus told his disciples " *Our Father* who art in heaven . . . " (Mt 6:9).

Hebrews 4:16 "Let us, therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

HOLY SPIRIT - An internal witness that causes us to instinctively call to God our Father "When we cry, 'Abba! Father' it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God." (Rom. 8:15-16). The Holy Spirit leads and guides God's children in paths of obedience to God.

Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.

DISCIPLINE We don't like to recognize this fact but scripture teaches us that God disciplines his children. (Heb 12:5-6, Prov. 3:11-12).

SUFFERING AND GLORY God gives us the privilege of walking the same path Jesus walked. "we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Rom 8:17).

FAMILY We, as God's children, are members of one family and the work of the church is "family work." What is the work of the church?

DELIVERANCE from sin and the law and a new position as a free heir of God. (Rom 8:15, Gal 4:5)

FUTURE Like many aspects of salvation, there is an eschatological component of adoption. Believers "wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23). The full revelation of the believer's adoption is freedom from the corruption present in this world.

Being a member of God's family includes the ultimate privilege of being like Him.
1John 3:2 " . . . but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Being conformed to the glorious body of Christ.
Phil 3:20-21 " . . . we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body . . . "

This is part of the promised inheritance for all God's children.

Material taken from the following:

William Barclay - The mind of St. Paul
Concise Theology - J. I. Packer
Lectures in Systematic Theology - Henry Thiessen
Systematic Theology - Wayne Grudem
The Epistle to the Romans - John Murray