

Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.  
Series: The Benefits Of Salvation  
**Adoption into the Family of God**

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## **Adoption.**

“All those that are justified, God vouchsafes, in and for His only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberty and privileges of the children of God, have His name put upon them, receive the spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by Him, as by a Father: yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting life.” (*Westminster Confession of Faith, XII*)

The sinner having been pardoned and made righteous in God's sight (that is, justified) and declared holy through union with Christ (that is, definitively sanctified), God legally constitutes that one His child and adopts that one into His family. Whereas the doctrine of justification speaks to the relationship of the Christian to God **as Lawgiver** (it declares that he/she has been judiciously acquitted of any and all transgressions of the law, and thus delivered forever from the wrath of God), whereas the doctrine of definitive sanctification speaks to the relationship of the Christian to God **as his/her new master** (it declares that he/she is no longer sin's slave and is now the servant of God), adoption speaks to the filial relationship of the Christian to God **as Father** (it declares that he/she is a child of God).

So: Justification: the believer relates to God as Lawgiver, being acquitted and delivered from the wrath of God

Definitive sanctification: the believer relates to God as new

Master, no longer a slave to sin but now a slave to righteousness as the servant of God

Adoption: the believer relates to God as Father, being now the child of God.

## **The Biblical Material.**

Some Greek words for child, son, etc.

*Teknon* – (teknon, “child”) John 1:12; 11:52; 1 John 3:1, 10; 5:2; Romans 8:16, 21; 9:8;

Ephesians 5:1; Phil. 2:15

*Nhpios*- (nayıpios, “infant, minor child”) Matt. 21:16; Mt 11:25, Luke 10:21, 1 Cor. 13:11, Romans 2:20 (**The Jew, who has the law, is conscious of being in the role of the teacher, who instructs the nayıpios, who does not have the law; but his failure to see his own hypocrisy in the light of the law undermines this role and brings dishonor to God. Romans 2:22-24**). (TDNT, Vol. 1. page 282) 1 Cor. 3:1; 1 Thess 2:7; Gal. 4:3 where Paul uses legal and temporal categories. The time before Jesus' coming on earth (v. 4) was the *nayıpios*-period of the immature and slaves. The *nayıpioi* were held in bondage as slaves by the *nomos* (Law) and the *stoicheia*, the elemental powers. Christ has

come to redeem those under the law that they might receive adoption as sons (*hyiothesia*). (TDNT, Vol 2, p. 282, 283)

*Paidion* – (paidion, “little child”—Hebrews 2:13, 14)

*Pais* – (pais, “child, young man, son servant”)

*Paidion* – (paidion) “very young child, infant”, Luke 2:43, John 4:51, Mark 10:14f

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The kingdom belongs to children, not because of any subjective qualities they may hold but because of their objective helplessness. Mt 18:3f refers to humbling oneself like a child. (TDNT, Vol. 1, page 285)

*Pais* – (pais, “servant son”) used of Israel (Luke 1:54, *pais theou*, Luke 1:69, Acts 4:25)

*Pais theou* (son of God) is not used of Christians in the NT, though Paul is conscious of being God’s servant in a way in accordance with Isaiah 49:1 (Gal. 1:15) and Paul also uses it with a wider sense when he calls himself (Romans 1:1), his fellow-workers (Phil 1:1; Col 4:12) and all Christians (1 Cor. 7:22) *douloi* (slaves or servants) of Christ.

*The King as God’s Son* – Only when Yahweh had acknowledged the new king as His son and, established his full royal name (2 Sam 7:9; 1 Kings 1:47), granted him a first request (Psalm 2:8; 20:5; 21:2, 4) and invested him with his crown (2 Kings 11:12; Psalm 21:3) and scepter (Psalm 110:2) could he begin his rule. (TDNT, Vol. 3, p. 636)

The NT talks about sons of the resurrection (Luke 20:36), sons of the kingdom (Mt 8:12; 13:38), sons of light (Luke 16:8; John 12:36), sons of encouragement (Acts 4:36) and even, on the opposing side, sons of the evil one, sons of hell, sons of this age, sons of destruction, sons of the devil, and sons of disobedience.

**Sonship** is the goal of hope, something to be fulfilled (Romans 8:23; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). True believers wait for adoption as sons and yet it is a present thing because true believers have been given the spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15f; Gal 4:6f). Christians enter into the inheritance because they are heirs of Christ and of God (Gal. 4:4ff; Romans 8:17). (TDNT, Vol. 1, pages 288-290)

The nation of Israel is viewed as God’s “son” in Exodus 4:22, Hosea 11:1, Isaiah 1:2 and elsewhere. Paul speaks of Israel’s national “adoption” in Romans 9:4. Of the believer’s adoption, Paul writes:

Ephesians 1.4, 5- “**In love He predestinated us to adoption through Jesus Christ unto Himself.**” Paul refers to the Father throughout Ephesians and represents Him as the subject of most of the verbs that speak of divine activity. Paul develops the believer’s walk in terms of the walk of a “child” before the Father, as in Ephesians 5:1, 8. Ephesians is rather like a treatise on adoption.

Galatians 4:4, 5- “**But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His son, born of a woman, born under law, in order that He might redeem those under law, that we might receive the adoption. And because you are sons [by adoption], God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son [by nature] into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba, Father.’”**

Romans 8.15, 16 – “**For you have not received a spirit of slavery [or bondage] again to fear, but you have the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.**”

Romans 8:23- "...we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of our body."

The doctrine of adoption states:

1. in love the Father predestinated the believer's adoption in Christ before the foundation of the world.
2. the Father sent His son into the world to do the objective redemptive work necessary both to the salvation of His people from the law's condemnation and to their adoptive elevation to the status of full, mature sonship from the tutelary discipline of the Mosaic economy (Gal. 4.1, 2) under which they as adopted children had lived in former times
3. the Father sent forth the Spirit of His Son, who is also the Spirit of adoption, into the heart of the believer, subjectively assuring him that he is the Father's child and enabling him to cry "Abba, Father," and
4. the child of God, having received the firstfruits of the Spirit of adoption, awaits the final stage of his adoption in the Eschaton when finally even his fallen body will be redeemed from corruption.

So, we see the Father's love from all eternity, redemption from past enslavement, a status and way of life now, and a future expectation.

**A legal action with eternal consequences.** Adoption envisions an action of the Father's part that is forensically constituting and not subjectively transforming in character. This means that by adoption the status of sonship is legally bestowed upon the believer. This is the highest privilege and the epitome of grace. Whereas justification addresses the question of one's relation to the law, and definitive sanctification addresses the question of one's relation to sin, adoption addresses the question of one's relation to God the Father Himself.

In Ephesians 1:5, when Paul relates the believer's adoption back to the Father's predestinating love, we have the ultimate source and the highest privilege brought together. In Ephesians 2:18, 19 both believing Jews and Gentiles have **access in one Spirit to the Father**. Believers are members of the household of God as children of God who is their Father by adoption. It's all about getting back to the Father.

Additional **privileges** immediately accrue to true believers:

**(1)** the Spirit of God's Son, the Spirit of adoption, not only testifies with their spirits that they are children of God; but also, as the pledge of their inheritance, the Spirit seals them as God's own possession unto the day of eschatological redemption (Eph. 4:30; cf Eph. 1:13, 14; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22).

**The Holy Spirit seals us. He indwells us. He is the down payment of blessing, of the believer's inheritance. He knows us; He is our Father and our God.**

Ephesians 1:13, 14 – The Spirit's sealing follows the person's believing as one of its consequences but it is represented by the aorist as an accomplished fact, suggesting that as He is the Witness to the fact that the believer is a child of God, and as a child also an heir of God, so the indwelling Spirit of adoption, given in conjunction with God's constituting act of adoption, becomes at the same time the "down payment" of the believer's full inheritance and the "mark" or "seal" that the believer belongs to God's household unto the final day of redemption.

2 Corinthians 1:21, 22 – The tense is aorist, indicating that for the believer the sealing is an accomplished fact, occurring at the point of the believer's adoption. Again, the indwelling Spirit is God's pledge of ownership, guaranteeing that the believer is a child of God forever.

(2) The believer also has the Father's name placed upon him/her. (Eph. 2:19; 3:14, 15), being assured thereby that he/she has the Father's protection and provision.

(3) Every believer immediately becomes Christ's brother or sister, Christ being the "firstborn" Son, i.e., the elder Brother among many brothers (Romans 8:29). The believer becomes an "heir of God, and co-heir with Christ" (Romans 8:17).

(4) Awaiting the believer in heaven is his/her "inheritance, imperishable, and undefiled, which will not fade away" (1 Peter 1:4), and the believer is assured that he/she will come into this inheritance because he/she knows that he/she is "kept" or guarded, protected, by the power of God through faith for the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:5).

Because of the status of adopted son, the believer is to walk in love as a child who is greatly loved and to walk in the light as a child of light. (Eph. 4:1, 2, 8-11). He is warned that he will experience His Father's chastening love and fatherly displeasure when he goes astray (Heb. 12:6-8), and as a family member in God's household, all other believers are his brothers and sisters, to be cherished and encouraged in the faith (1 John 4:20, 21; 5:1-20; Romans 15:14).

**Summary.** Adoption is an act of God's free grace whereby we are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God. (*Shorter Catechism*, Ques. 34). The Father makes this objective determination concerning the believer, determined upon the believer's faith in Christ. It is bestowed as an act of His free grace by which the believer becomes a child of God, the highest privilege available to fallen sons of Adam. With it comes all the privileges accruing to one who enjoys the status of being an heir of all the promises of God and of everlasting salvation, access to the Father's throne of grace, His pity, protection, provision, and loving chastening, and the seal of His Spirit unto the day of redemption. With it also comes the responsibility to walk as a child of God, to walk in love, walk as a child of light, to walk in truth, to walk in wisdom, etc. (Reymond, p. 759-762)

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