

Life Group Notes

Sunday 28 October 2018

Speaker: Richard Walker

Series: Heights of Love

Title: The Assurance of Adoption

Passage: Romans 8:12-17

How does the bit we are looking at fit in the flow of Paul's letter?

Having laid out what the gospel is in ch 1-4, Paul tries to anticipate, in ch 5-8 all the questions/objections his hearers might have. His aim is assurance. He wants them to know truly and deeply that through his death and resurrection, Christ has won for us the privilege of being adopted into God's family.

What do I need to understand as I approach this section?

- *A change of allegiance.* The Bible says that we were once dead to God and united to the spirit of Lawlessness/Sin, but through Christ, we have died to that allegiance. We have no obligations to that former life of sin anymore. Just as death ends all your legal obligations in this life (marriage, children, job, debts etc.) so in Christ, all your legal obligations to serving sin and the corrupted identity you got from that former way of life have been fully and finally done away with. Not only that, but we have been raised to a new life, a new allegiance, we have a new Father and we've been united, in Christ, to a new Spirit, the Holy Spirit.
- *A change of direction* Our bodies and minds, (our flesh) that were corrupted and trained to live in that corruption over years, serving our spiritual allegiance to sin and the devil, now have to be retrained to serve this new allegiance of our spirits to the Holy Spirit. It is the difficulty of this "retraining" that often discourages us and makes us want to disqualify ourselves from God's purpose.

Understanding verses 12-17

Through adopting us, God the Father has "legally bound" himself to us in love forever. As a result, we have:

- *A new Spirit* - we have been united, not to just any old spirit, but the eternal, holy Spirit of God (v15) and it is he who enables us to know and grow in the love God has for us as well as walk in the way God desires for us.
- *A new status* - we have all been adopted as sons (v15) - not because God doesn't like having daughters, but because it's symbolic of (amongst other things) the fact that all of us carry his name and his name is synonymous with his presence. Just as a son receives the family name from his father and passes it on to his son, so to all those who have the name of God in them can pass that name on as they labour to bring others into the family of God.
- *New rights* - we can call God "our Father" (v15). This would be outrageous if it were not true. Who are we to think we have the attentive ear of the Lord of all existence and time, but we do. Let the weight of the truth that "**our dad is God and God is our dad**" sit with you. Let it cultivate both intimacy and reverence. Remember too, that the love God the Father has for us is the same love he has for his eternal son (John 17:23). Though we have been adopted, that does not mean we are second-class children in his family. God the Father has no favourites. If we are in Christ, we are loved by God like Christ is loved.
- *New routines* - God has given us his Spirit so that, as well as having a new identity, we have a new focus for organising our daily lives (v14). Just as when you were a kid and went round to your friend's house, you would learn to follow the routines of that household, so now being adopted into God's family means learning the rhythms of this new family which in our case is prayer, worship, bible-reading, fasting, serving others, gathering together, being witnesses for Christ etc. The love of God makes the "daily chores" of obedience and living in God's house joyful, not optional.
- *New responsibilities*
 - *As the Holy Spirit reminds us that we are God's children* (v16) so we give our amen by following his promptings and leadings. Sometimes following the Holy Spirit might cause us to suffer by being mocked or persecuted by others. This is good, for when we suffer for and with Christ, it proves to our often wavering hearts that we have truly died to the old way of life and are living for God. Don't fear or begrudge suffering for being a Christian, thank God for what it is proving in you.
 - *Kill sin in yourself by the Spirit* (v12-13) The evidence that we belong to God and that our Christian confession is not fraudulent is that we start to kill sin in ourselves by the power of the Spirit. What that means that when you face a temptation, instead of giving in, you declare a Bible verse to yourself and then

pray walk in the truth of that verse until the temptation loses interest and wanders off. Like a surgeon removing a cancerous tumour from a patient with a surgical knife, (it is a partnership between the surgeon and the knife - one cannot do it without the other) so we kill sin by the help of the Spirit. For example, memorise Rev. 21:7-8 (warning) and 2 Tim 1:7 (encouragement) so that when fear makes you want to disobey God you can quote those verses to yourself and then thank God that Christ has won for you the power to believe and walk in the truth of his words.

- *A New Future* - Before we came to God, the only future we could expect was condemnation and separation from the blessing of God in Hell, but now, because God the Father has given the whole creation to Jesus his son as an inheritance - so all those who belong to Christ and who are his children also inherit with Christ the creation that he inherits - eternal life in a (re)new(ed) world where there is no more sin, suffering and death. And where we inherit our true selves, no longer corrupted, distorted and shriveled by sin.

So What?

- *Don't be discouraged when you have "adoption issues"* - when you feel you don't belong and are tempted to return to your "old family" remember that God loves you not because of your perfection but because of his character and his promise and he will be true to his word.
- Declare God's promises and your new identity to yourself - Don't just listen to your heart spewing all its vacuous nonsense. Your heart doesn't really know what it thinks. Declare God's words (the Bible). It may feel like death and as painful as performing surgery on yourself, (see Matt. 5:29) but it will, in the end, bring you life.
- Give your heart to understanding and living in God's great love for you. Forge routines in your day, week, month and year that make room for this to happen.
- Perseverance is more important than perfection - there will be moments when you let God and yourself down. In those moments, remind your heart of God's faithful love, repent and know strength to carry on. Your failures may be a surprise to you, but they are never a surprise to God, and he still loves you.

Go Deeper

If you're struggling with habitual sin and need help to break the cycle, why not come to the "Go Deeper" session on Monday 5th Sept at 8pm in the church offices. There will be a men-only session run by Richard Walker and a women-only session run by Elli Walker these will both run alongside the usual prayer meeting. If you have any questions about them, do contact either Richard or Elli via their details on Churchsuite.

Suggested questions for reflection/discussion

(Don't do them all if you are actually in lifegroup - it would take ages!)

1. Why should the truth of God the Father adopting us give us great assurance in life?
2. How does the reality of death and resurrection help you understand how you should view your old way of life in sin and your new life in God?
3. How should our body, mind and spirit interact now that the Holy Spirit lives in you?
4. Whether we are male or female - how does our new status as "sons" teach us more about what God has done for us and in us?
5. How should the phrase "*Our Dad is God and God is our Dad!*" provoke both intimacy and reverence in us at the same time?
6. How does the grace of God enable us to embrace our "family chores" joyfully rather than see them as an optional extra?
7. Have you ever suffered for being a faithful Christian what was it like?
8. What Bible verses do you need to memorise (both warnings and encouragements) so that when temptation and sin come knocking, you are ready to resist them in the power of God?
9. How should the hope of inheriting a (re)new(ed) creation with Christ, shape the way you live now?