

THE BLESSINGS OF FAMILY

JOHN 14.15-21—

¹⁵ "If you love me, keep my commands. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.

The First Family

"On that day you will realize that I am in my Father . . ."

"And now, Father, glorify me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began."

JOHN 17.5

Arguably, the most profound emphasis presented in the teaching of Jesus was that of God as "Father." It was an understanding and identity that Jesus possessed (Luke 2.49) long before the crowds heard this unfamiliar emphasis, particularly in his "Kingdom Sermon" (Matthew 5-7). It was, however, not rooted in any sense of human relationship, but in a union that predated human history: *"Father . . . the glory I had with You before the world began."* Jesus did not come to tout the fraternity of humanity, but to re-present the relationship of the original eternal family: *No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.* ^{P18}

Luke 2.49, 50—

"Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Our Broken Family History

“The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him.”

Then they asked him, “Where is your father?” “You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”

JOHN 8.19

As we have heard numerous times in his own words, Jesus came as the exclusive authorized representative of God, and notably, as the *One-and-Only Son* of the Father. Apart from Jesus the Son, there is no understanding of God as Father (cf. John 14.7).

The Jews claimed legitimacy as the children of Abraham, but Jesus declared that the genetic alteration of our human nature by sin is so total and irreversible that we cannot know God, please Him, or claim any identity with Him (John 8.33-35, 44). This truth about the human condition was also the emphatic teaching of the apostles.¹

John 8.33-35, 44—

They answered him, “We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.

¹ Romans 3.10-12, 22b-23—

As it is written:

“There is no one righteous, not even one;
there is no one who understands;
there is no one who seeks God.

All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.”

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Ephesians 2.1-4—

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Adopted By His Father

“I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

PROLOGUE 12, 13

As Jesus told both the Jews and his disciples, he is the exclusive representative of God and the sole means of relationship with God, especially, with God as Father. In other words, he is the only access to God (John 14.6) and our only validation with God the Father (John 1.12). Jesus invalidated the basis of legitimacy, as claimed by the Jews, as descendants of Abraham; the only basis was faith in the One who preceded Abraham in existence (John 8.56-58) and through whom Abraham himself was justified by faith as the “father of all who believe” (Romans 4.1-25).

John 14.6—

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

John 1.12—

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 8.56-58—

Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

“You are not yet fifty years old,” they said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

Romans 4.9b-13—

We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness. Under what circumstances was it credited? Was it after he was circumcised, or before? It was not after, but before! And he received circumcision as a sign, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. And he is then also the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised but who also follow in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. It was not through the law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.

The words “it was credited to him” were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.

ROMANS 4.23-25

Through the substitutionary work of Christ (Galatians 4.3-5):

- (1) sin is atoned and we are reconciled to God (Colossians 1.19-20);
- (2) our status changes from enemies (Colossians 1.21) to beloved children (1 John 3.1);
- (3) we are born again, by the Spirit, with a recreated spiritual DNA like that of the exclusive Son (Romans 8.11; Colossians 2.11; 3.10; Hebrews 2.11-12; 1 John 3.5-10);
- (4) we are adopted into a spiritual and eternal “Father-child” relationship of both prerogatives (Galatians 4.6-7; Romans 8.17) and parenting (Hebrews 12.5-11).

Galatians 4.3-5—

So also, when we were underage, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

Colossians 1.19-20—

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Colossians 1.21—

Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior.

1 John 3.1—

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

Romans 8.11—

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

Colossians 2.11—

In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ.

Colossians 3.10—

And have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

Hebrews 2.11-12—

Both the one who makes people holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters. He says, "I will declare your name to my brothers and sisters; in the assembly I will sing your praises."

1 John 3.5-10—

But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

Galatians 4.6-7—

Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

Romans 8.17—

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Hebrews 12.5-11—

And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,

"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Full Family Life

“Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.”

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

JOHN 11.25-26

As we previously noted in chapter 12, Jesus would not appear again to the crowds; after his resurrection, his appearances would be limited to those who had believed in him (1 Corinthians 15.5-6). He was going to the cross to become the source of life for all who obey him (Hebrews 5.9); as our Substitute, he would be resurrected as “the firstborn from among the dead” (Colossians 1.18).

His death and resurrection provides our justification;
justification makes possible our adoption;
adoption means that we possess the present (holy) and future (eternal) life of Christ—

When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

COLOSSIANS 3.4

1 Corinthians 15.5-6—

And that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep.

Hebrews 5.9—

And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.

Colossians 1.18—

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Why It Matters—

The Doctrine of Adoption is one of the most important teachings for us to understand. We are not by virtue of our humanness, as many would tell us, all children of God. You are either a child of God through faith in the work of Christ, or you are a child of sin, separated from the life that is in Christ and destined for eternal punishment.

Many people are “cultural Christians”—they know about Christ but have never been truly “born again.” They do not possess the nature of Christ or live by the power of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle John wrote that those who have the hope of Christ’s appearing “purify themselves, just as he is pure” (1 John 3.3).

Finally, this is a critical “defense of the Gospel” truth; Jesus declared that he is the “only begotten” Son of God (John 3.16), the only way that we can know God (John 14.6-7), and the only one who can give us the legitimacy to be children of God (John 1.12-13). Any religion that minimizes this status and work of Christ is a false religion (1 John 4.1-3, 6).

John 3.16—

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 14.6-7—

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well.”

John 1.12-13—

He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

1 John 4.1-3, 6—

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.