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Sermon Series - By Grace You Have Been Saved
Sermon Title and Text - Adopted in Love by God: Romans 8:14-17

Sermon Points:

Introduction: Where Do You Find Your Identity?

1. What Does God Mean to Teach Us by Adoption?

He Loves Us Not Because He Should, But Because He Wants To (1 John 3:1, Galatians 4:1-7)

2. How Does God Show Us This Reality?

- God Loves Us With Great Planning (Ephesians 1:5)
- God Loves Us at Great Cost (Galatians 4:4-5)
- God Grants Us a Great Inheritance (Romans 8:17, Galatians 4:6)
- God Grants Us an Intimate Witness of His Love (Romans 8:15-16)
- God Grants Us Intimate Help to Walk With Jesus (Romans 8:14, 17)

Application: Identity as Adopted Children of the Living God

Corporate Prayer:

Father, thank you for purchasing redeeming us from the slave camp and bringing into your family. Thank for giving us your Spirit as an intimate witness that you are our Father and as an intimate help to walk with Jesus. Father, help us live now in great hope of being with you as our inheritance for all of eternity.

Introduction: Where Do You Find Your Identity?

Where do you find your identity and how does it shape your reality and your actions?

What I mean by identity is the list of things that you feel most defines you.

Mom? Dad? Pastor? Coach? Businessman? Son? Daughter? Athlete? Musician? Sufferer?

The identity we feel most defines us will so often determine how we act and the way we view ourselves. Take any one of those identities above and it probably becomes the thing we most easily talk about, the thing we most easily try to serve in our lives, and the way we measure our success and failure, and therefore the way we find our value and our hope and our purpose in life. But, in all of those things, if our hope is there, we will often live either proud of ourselves and ready for a fall or live in shame of the way we are failing people and the way we feel people view us.

These identities never satisfy us. They never make us content. And too often we simply live lives of low-grade shame and guilt because we never live up to them and think people just put up with us and God is angry with us and we can never do better.

I want you to find your identity in something deeper and truer today for the sake of God's glory and your joy.

What Does God Mean to Teach Us by Adoption?

Recently as I've been examining my own heart and also interacting with others, one of the most helpful questions I've started to ask is "How do you think God views you right now?" So many times we ask the question, "What do you think God is doing in this?" And that's a helpful question to stop and examine what

God might be trying to accomplish in us and through us. But, more fundamental than what God is doing has to do with how God views us in Jesus.

You see, if you think that God is normally frustrated with you and angry with you, then you will have the idea that God wants to get back at us. Or that God is simply reacting with frustration.

Many of us have this idea that God sent his Son to die for our sins and bring us into his family, but since that point he's just been barely putting up with us. Or, we think that God loves us more or less depending on our behavior.

One of the questions I'm always trying to impress with my kids is this, "Does daddy love you more when you're good or when you're bad?" They know the answer is "good and bad."

Why is that so important? Because then when I need to discipline my kids, they understand I am disciplining them because I love them and want what is best for them, not because I love them less and am angry with them. When we make decisions for our family or for our days that they aren't huge fans of, they can know that daddy has the big picture in mind and is trying to love his family.

But, if they had the idea that I loved them less because they had disobeyed or made a mistake, then perhaps they would start to cower in fear when they messed up. Or perhaps they would start to be tempted to hide things they did wrong from me. Or perhaps they would be tempted to live their whole lives as perfectly in-line kids, but not do it from a heart that is pure and is trying to honor Jesus, but a heart that simply wants to make sure daddy is not mad at them.

And so they would live feeling good about themselves and proud when they were doing well and would probably find their identity in their actions and would live feeling sad and ashamed when they felt they had failed and find their identity in their failures.

But, no good father wants his children to feel as if they are defined in relationship by what they do or don't do. We want them to know that we love them unconditionally and they cannot fail out of our love, even if they fail in life.

And we want them to know that we are always working for their good, even when it's hard for them to understand that.

In adoption God is teaching us that he Loves Us Not Because He Should, But Because He Wants To

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. (1 John 3:1)

God is showing us his love when he calls us his children. Do you feel this reality deep in your soul? Does this feel like your identity? That you are a child of God. John goes out of his way to emphasize it. And So. We. Are. This is who you are. You belong to God, not as a slave, but as a child. Someone he has decided to take responsibility for and care for and love and provide for and keep and guide and lead and teach and love.

And notice that God took the initiation in this love, we weren't left on his doorstep and he reluctantly took us in. He came to get us:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)

We were slaves to the world. But God sent his Son and redeemed us. He purchased us. He paid our price for all of our law-breaking to buy us back from the power of sin and to bring us into his family as children.

God has taken the initiation in this adoption. God has decided to adopt rebels into his family. To pay their ransom. To take them from the slave-camp that they loved and thought was great and to bring us into his family. God has loved us and redeemed us and adopted us as his children because he wants to, not because he has to.

How Does God Show Us This Reality?

God Loves Us With Great Planning (Ephesians 1:5)

*Even as he chose us in him **before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.*

Adoptions in this life take great planning. They take great patience. There are lots of steps that need to be accomplished. But, the end goal is clear in adoption, to have children. The end goal is that they are a part of your family. And that is exactly what God has done in his great planning to adopt us as his children.

God created the world. God began the process of redemption throughout many families and people through thousands and thousands of years, God sent his Son at the proper time to enter our mess, live the perfect life, die the death we deserved to die, and then raised him from the dead. God sent his Spirit to open our eyes and make us alive to see Jesus as our Savior, God granted us faith, God justified us by faith in Jesus, and God brings us into the family.

We feel the love of God in adoption for us when we see the great planning that have taken place by his sovereign will to love us. We could not have willed ourselves to adoption any more than children can will themselves to be adopted in this life. We simply were waiting in the slave camp and God came and redeemed us and brought us home.

God Loves Us at Great Cost (Galatians 4:4-5)

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

We can often know how precious something is to someone by how much they are willing to spend on it. In these verses we see that God paid the most infinite price in the universe when he sent his Son, the God-man to have his blood poured out on the cross for us.

And notice the “so that” here, the purpose behind it all. The purpose is so that we could receive adoption. Notice that God accomplishes this so that we can receive this. Again, God’s grace takes the initiative and wins our adoption and we simply receive it. We simply get brought into the family of God and loved forever.

The law declared us guilty and slaves with no way to ever pay our debts. But God redeemed us through the blood of Jesus and brought us into his family, with no further debts to pay, no need to earn his love, and with the promise to be our Good Father forever.

God Grants Us a Great Inheritance (Romans 8:17, Galatians 4:7)

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:16-17)

So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:7)

The term for adoption in these texts is legal and final. We become an official part of the family. Adopted children get everything every other child gets.

And for us, that means we get everything that belongs to Jesus, who is the only child not adopted in God’s family. Jesus says in John 17 that we will be with him to see his glory. Jesus says that he is going to prepare a place for us.

And what all of that is pointing to is that the best gift is ultimately being face to face with God and enjoying his presence forever. Our inheritance is not something here on heaven where rust and moth can destroy. Our inheritance is eternal. Our inheritance is God himself forever. And in his presence is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

God Grants Us an Intimate Witness of His Love (Romans 8:15-16)

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

God knew that there would be some time when we would not be with him face to face but we would still belong to him as children. And so Jesus says in John 16:7 that it is better for us that he left this earth and God sent the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit dwells in each of us.

And the Holy Spirit is the intimate witness of the love of God for us. The Holy Spirit reminds us in our sin and in our suffering that we belong to God.

The cry of Abba, Father is a cry of identity. It's a cry of a child that knows it has a Father. Babies stop crying in orphanages because they know that no one will come to pick them up and help them. But, babies with parents cry, because they know they have people that love them in their need and weakness.

God doesn't leave us as orphans. This is God himself giving himself to us so that we know we belong to him! What extravagant love. We give gifts to show love. Can you think of a greater gift than God sending himself to dwell inside of us to confirm his love to us.

When you have sinned and wonder if God could ever love someone like you, the Spirit will cry "Abba, Father." When you are in deep suffering and you wonder if God has forgotten about you, the Spirit will cry, "Abba, Father." When you have sinned and perhaps God is disciplining you by his grace and you want to run away from him and his discipline, the Spirit will cry, "Abba, Father." And in these cries, your God will keep you and remind you of his love by the very Spirit he sent to confirm his Fatherly care for you.

God Grants Us Intimate Help to Walk With Jesus (Romans 8:14, 17)

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God...The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Notice that all who are led by the Spirit are sons of God. This is part of our identity. If we have been redeemed and belong to God, then the Spirit dwells in us and leads us. The Spirit reminds us we are children of God and heirs with Christ, and the Spirit helps us walk with Jesus through this life.

We have to suffer with him in this life. That means we will walk through all of life's trials and heartaches and sin, but we will do it with Jesus. We will be walking with him. We will be suffering with him. And we will be glorified with him.

This is what it means to be united with Jesus. We are with him in these things. But, how are we practically and experientially with Jesus?

*You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the **Spirit of Christ** does not belong to him. **But if Christ is in you**, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (Romans 8:9-10)*

The Spirit of God is also the Spirit of Christ and in this reality of One God and three persons, the Spirit dwelling in us is so full and complete that it is as if Christ is in us. And so as we pray and read and navigate life, we are doing with Jesus by the Spirit. Jesus is with us.

In Matthew 28:17-20 when Jesus gives us our call to make disciples. He tells us to go in his power and that he will be with us to the end of the age. But, Jesus ascended to his Father. So, how is Jesus with us? Jesus is with us by the Spirit. We have his power and his presence by the Spirit.

And this power and presence of the Spirit identifies us as children of God, reminds us we are children of God, and it means we have the privilege of walking intimately with Jesus by the Spirit through every trial and temptation of life. We suffer with him. We will be glorified with him.

So, don't think of Jesus as far away. And don't think of God as far away. God the Father is with us and Jesus is with us to fight our sins, to sustain us through suffering, to go and make disciples, to love each other, and to make it to glory by the Spirit of God.

God loves us because he wants to not because he has to. God shows us this by loving us with great planning since before the foundation of the world and at great cost with the blood of Jesus to redeem us from the slave camp of sin and the guilt of the law. God has granted us a glorious inheritance with him forever. God has granted us an intimate witness to his love for us by the Holy Spirit who dwells inside of us. And God has granted us the Holy Spirit to help intimate help to walk with Jesus through the suffering and sin in this life until the day we are glorified with Jesus to be with God forever.

Application: Identity as Adopted Children of the Living God

Children of the living God, find in their hearts the cry "Abba, Father." This is the same cry we hear from the Son of God before he went to the cross to do the hardest, most loving thing the world has ever seen. (Mark 14:36) This cry confirms to us that our greatest identity is as children loved by God because of Jesus. This cry and this identity remind us of who we are and what we are called to:

We are reminded that God is our Father and that nothing can separate us from his love (Romans 8:30-39). Therefore, we can get up and walk away from shame and guilt. We don't need the approval of others, we live in our identity of adopted children of God.

We are reminded that we will be with Jesus forever because the Spirit is the seal of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

We are reminded that we belong to our Father and that nothing is better than to do his will for the joy set before us like Jesus did (Hebrews 12).

We are reminded that we belong to our Father and that by the Spirit we are with Jesus in suffering in this life, he will sustain us, he will continue to help us cry Abba, Father, and he will continue to lead us until the day we are glorified. Like Jesus was sustained in the Garden.

We are reminded that Sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. The Spirit that confirms our adoption with the cry, will lead us to walk more and more in a family resemblance to our brother, Jesus. We will be transformed to be like him by the Spirit that helps us walk with him. (2 Corinthians 3:18) The Spirit will help us fight the fleshly desires and temptations to sin, because we already belong to the Father as his blood-bought children.

We are reminded that Jesus purchased many sons and daughters for his Father and we will begin to look around this room and think of ourselves as truly as family because we've been bought, redeemed, and adopted by Jesus. We are truly a blood-bought family. That's not just a phrase we say, but it's a reality we believe. We share the inheritance. We fight sin by the Spirit. We cry out together and we look at each other as children whom God sees as precious and loved. We look at each other as those that God purchased with great planning and cost, and whom God has given a great inheritance and intimate Spirit to dwell in us. And we love each other as brothers and sisters in Christ who are eager to lay aside differences and go to the cross together to again see Jesus and be reminded we belong to our Father.

We are reminded that we are adopted and that God might be pleased to adopt many more for the sake of his glory as we tell them about our brother who died on the cross to save them from their sins. The cry Abba, Father is a family cry that makes us long to add to our family.

We are reminded that we have this Spirit of adoption as Sons, our identity is as children of God, with Christ, bought by his blood, brought into his household, and therefore we are no longer enslaved to sin and fearful of God. Jesus sets us free from sin and we are children of God. We are loved by God at great cost and with great

planning, so that he gets all the glory and we get the joy of intimacy with him now by the Spirit and intimacy forever in our inheritance with him face to face.