

Yarra Valley Anglican Church – Sunday 3rd May, 2020
Romans 8:14-17 God is for us, Therefore... We Are God's Children
Rev Matthew Smith

1. "I Wish He Would Adopt Me"

In his book 'From Here to Eternity', Ray Galea tells the story of a former Australian Governor-General. One Christmas Eve, the Governor General generously Invites some homeless teenagers to visit and enjoy his residence. The street kids are polite, amazed, and very grateful. One of the homeless boys is interviewed by TV news. He talks with awe and wonder About the size of the house; The beauty of the gardens. The deliciousness of the food; The homeless boy particularly loved the pool. He was honoured the Governor-General Would lend him some swimming trunks. At this point the interviewer asks the boy: "Could you wish for anything more?" As quick as a flash the homeless boy responds: "Yes! I wish he would adopt me!"

What a cheeky, but clever answer from this teenager. It's one thing to taste the life of the privileged for a few hours, But adoption means this life can be his permanently! When a child is adopted into a blessed and privileged family, The child then receives the family's blessing and privilege. Well, today we consider adoption into God's family, And the blessings and privileges God's children are entitled to.

2. Romans 8: God is For Us

So we're making our way through Romans ch.8. Paul's overarching point in this chapter is: God is For Us! God is for you! God is for his people! And if God is For Us, if God is on our side, Some truly amazing implications flow from of this.

Firstly, v1-4 Despite our sin, God does not condemn us. God has given us his Son as an offering for our sin. Though he was innocent, Jesus is condemned in our place, That we may be acquitted, justified, declared righteous.

Secondly, in v5-13, because God is For Us, He also gives us his Spirit. We no longer live according to our sinful thoughts & desires. We live according to the Holy Spirit, We are renewed & transformed That we may please God in righteousness.

But there's more: we see it today in Romans 8:14-17. God is For Us, therefore we are adopted as his children. When we receive God the Holy Spirit, we also receive a new status.

*v14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.
& v15 the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship.*

3. Adopted as God's Children

Remember Paul is writing back in the 1st century. He's writing to believers in Rome; it's a patriarchal society. Under Roman law, if an adult needs an heir or someone to carry

the family name, it's a recognized practice to adopt a male son. Adoptive sonship means the adoptee is taken out of his previous state & receives a new status. The adoptee starts a new life, has a new father, is part of new family; He has new honour, new rights, new inheritance He is now equal to, and in some cases even on a higher level Than what the biological children may enjoy.

So the Apostle Paul is writing to these Roman believers Who have this understanding of adoption. They see it all the time in their context. And Paul says to them: this is what God has done for you who are trusting in his Son and have received his Spirit. He has adopted you into his family. You have this amazing new status and privilege.

4. Privileges of our Adoption

Sinclair Ferguson says: *"The notion that we are children of God, His own sons and daughters... is the mainspring of Christian living... Our sonship to God is the apex of Creation and the goal of redemption."* J.I. Packer says: *[Adoption] is the highest privilege the gospel offers.* Friends, if you're a Christian, adoption as God's child Is the highest privilege you enjoy! Here are four reasons why divine adoption is such a blessing.

1) Assurance.

Paul makes this point:

*The Spirit you received does not make you slaves,
so that you live in fear again...
[Rather] The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit
that we are God's children.*

Obviously a slave has the lowest status. A slave has no guarantees. They have to earn their keep. They have to keep their master satisfied. Fearful that at any moment they're gone. One bad decision, one wrong word, one little mistake and they could be out. So a slave has to walk on eggshells... they have no assurance. A slave only has fear... but a son has freedom.

To my Christian friends, God doesn't treat us as slaves. Through Jesus, we are no longer slaves to sin and death. But we are children of God, his sons and daughters. And because we're his children we don't need to prove ourselves. He accepts us... even when we're naughty and make mistakes. So many people believe, If I just do good, if I'm a good person, then God will accept me. But if I do bad, then he'll certainly reject me. So many Christian's believe this: That we can somehow earn God's love and acceptance. I've just got to stay in God's good books. But that's not how Christianity works... That's not how God treats us.

When my son Levi was born, I wasn't thinking to myself: I don't' really love this baby. This boy's doing nothing for me. He's gonna have to grow up and earn my love. No way! I vividly remember the moment I first laid eyes on my boy, And instantly, I was bursting with love for him. Or imagine I say to my son: Listen son, if you disobey me; If you

misbehave I'll stop loving you; In fact I'll disown you. Now that would make me a horrible father wouldn't it? The truth is, I love Levi when he's good... I also love him when he's bad. I'll certainly never kick him out of my family, Or disown him. He's my boy; he's my special little guy. Levi doesn't need to prove himself to me. He doesn't need to earn my acceptance. And so it is with God's love to all his children. In God's family we find absolute stability & security.

A friend of mine, a fellow pastor, often makes this point about adoption: In the US it's legally possible to disown a biological child. But it's illegal to disown an adopted child. If you adopt a child you're stuck with them! Now I researched this and it's actually not true. According to one article, Between 1-5% of US adoptions get legally dissolved each year. These 'un-adopted' children are then put up for "second-chance adoptions." It's so tragic isn't it! But this is the world we live in... Families fall apart. Father's fail to love & children are disowned. But it's different with God and his family. God is under no obligation to adopt us does. It's his decision. An act of sheer grace. But when God does adopt us as his child... it sticks. Even when we sin and stray from him, He will not change his mind about us. There is no unadoption with God.

To make our adoption binding and certain. God gives us his Holy Spirit. As Ray Galea put it: The Spirit of God functions a bit like a believer's adoption papers: the papers are signed and sealed, guaranteeing we belong to God.

Friends, can we know, can we have assurance that we are loved and accepted by God forever? To quote Bob the Builder: Yes We Can! The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

The privileges of divine adoption:

2) Intimacy

We read in v16 *By the Spirit of God we cry, "Abba, Father."* The NT is written in Greek, but *Abba* is an Aramaic word: It's an affectionate word which means father or dad. It implies deep intimacy. This is how the Holy Spirit leads us to relate to God. We don't come to God as a fearful slave before a master. We don't come to him as a guilty criminal before a judge. We don't come to him as an insignificant pawn in his cosmic creation. No! We come to God as a confident child embraces her loving dad.

The other day I was walking down the streets of Healesville, When a person literally comes up to me and grabs my leg. I don't mean just a little grasp. I mean this person really wraps their arms around my leg. So I'm standing there, out in public with this person clinging onto me! And you know what I did? I just let them hold on. Now that probably sounds pretty strange right? But the person doing it was my son. If anyone else did this I'd probably push them away. If any of you did this it would be entirely inappropriate. But my son and I have an intimate relationship. Levi has a right, has access to me that none of you have. So he's aloud to do that kind of thing.

So because we have been adopted into God's family, God is now our father, our dad, And we enjoy the privilege of close intimacy with him. And this is displayed most perfectly when we pray: We cry out: Our Father in heaven... In the Qur'an there are 99 names for God, but none of them is 'Father'. A Muslim is never permitted to address Allah in such personal terms. Bilquis Cheikh, converted from Islam to Christianity. In her book 'I Dared to Call Him Father', She describes her journey with God: "O Father, my Father... Father God. Hesitantly, I spoke His name aloud... And then, as if something broke through for me I found myself trusting that he was indeed hearing me, just as my earthly father had always done. Father, O my Father God, I cried, with growing confidence. My voice seemed unusually loud in the large bedroom as I knelt on the rug beside my bed. But suddenly that room wasn't empty anymore. He was there!"

Friends, through adoption we have the privilege of intimacy with God our father. I hope and pray we enjoy that privilege everyday.

The third privilege is *Inclusion*

This is a subtle point but an important one. We must realise in these verses Paul is talking in the plural, He's writing collectively to the church.

*So v15 the Spirit you [all] received
brought about [all] your adoption to sonship.
And by [the Spirit] we cry, "Abba, Father."*

*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are
children, then we are heirs—
heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ*

So this is a simple point. When God adopts you, you are included into a family: God becomes your intimate father. But everyone else adopted into his family becomes your brother and sister.

In vs14-17, as we read about God leading us out of slavery and adopting us to sonship There's an allusion back to Israel's exodus from Egypt. Israel is brought out of slavery in Egypt We are brought out of slavery to sin and death. Israel is led by God with the pillar of cloud and fire. We are lead by God the Holy Spirit. Israel is made a Son of God. We are adopted to sonship. But all this happens in a collective context. God doesn't just adopt Moses, or Aaron the High-Priest. The entire nation becomes his chosen people, his Son. And it's the same with us! God doesn't just adopt you! He adopts a worldwide family, made of every nation, tribe & language. You are part of this much bigger family. You have millions and millions of B+S around the world.

I wonder if you think of other believers in this way? I wonder if you treat other Christian's as your family? How does this change the way we care for church members During this time of lockdown? Sinclair Ferguson says this: If Christ is not afraid to

indwell them, I will not be slow to embrace them. Or if God is not afraid to accept and adopt them, I will not be slow to welcome and love them.

So my Christian brothers and sisters: The privileges of Divine adoption:

1) Assurance. 2) Intimacy. 3) Inclusion

4) Inheritance

*v17 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.*

A child is the normal recipient of a father's estate. Back when Paul is writing, it was the firstborn who inherited the lion's share. So in God's family, Christ is the firstborn and true heir of the father. And yet, Paul says, those who believe in the Son, Are made co-heirs with him; And share in his glorious, eternal inheritance.

Mike Bird from Ridley College says this; What Paul has in mind is the ultimate reversal. Going from destitution of slavery, to being the little brother of the crown prince of the universe This is far better than a rags-to-riches story! We have gone from worldly wretchedness To royal status, princes and princesses of our heavenly father. Co-enthroned with the risen Christ who is now our brother!

But before we get ahead of ourselves, Let's remember this is no prosperity gospel. Paul clearly says: Before we share in Jesus' glory. We must first share in his sufferings. Yes, a crown of glory awaits those who are following Christ in faith. But that path to glory takes us under the shadow of the cross. As Jesus was tested, persecuted, suffered, So are we as we track toward our final destination.

Final Encouragement

Australian psychologist, Stephen Biddulph says that in a room of 100 Australian men, 33 men haven't spoken to their fathers in years, maybe decades. Another 33 will speak to their fathers, but it ends badly: words are said, someone storms out, & a door is slammed. The last 33 say they have an okay relationship with their fathers. They catch up once a week for dinner, but it's not exactly a warm relationship. Biddulph goes on to say that in a room of 100 Australian men, only 1 can say they have a warm functional relationship with their father.

Now if those devastating statistics are correct, It's possible, maybe probable That the relationship you had or have with your father Has been somewhat dysfunctional, Or at least unhealthy. Maybe your father never gave you security and stability. The family home was marked by fear, You had to walk on eggshells To avoid suffering his wrath. Maybe you never experienced intimacy with your father. He was physically or emotionally distant, absent or unloving. Or worse domestic violence was an issue. Maybe you never had a brother or sister. And this has always been a great

disappointment for you. A source loneliness and isolation. Maybe your father has died, And talk about an inheritance opens past hurts. The inheritance was wasted away, Or unjustly divided, Or led to family conflict and breakdown.

If any of this has been your experience, How painful and devastating this must be for you. But know this: it's different with God. He is the perfect, ideal heavenly father: When he adopts you he offers you Assurance, intimacy, inclusion and an inheritance. Is this kind of relationship you want with God? Is this the kind of privileged and bless life you want to experience? Then embrace his Son as your brother, your saviour, your king. By faith ask for and receive his Holy Spirit. And fall into his everlasting arms. Romans 8:14-17: God is For Us, therefore we are adopted as his children.