

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today is the day in the church year when we celebrate that God is Triune. The word triune describes the unique nature of God. God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, not three Gods but one God. Today we especially want to celebrate that that our Triune God has done for us: adopted us into his family.

The impression most people have of God is that God is the boss. Or even judge... enforcer of the laws. Do your job and God will be pleased. Do your job and God will evaluate your performance and if you get a good review, you'll get to go to heaven. Every world religion except Christianity has this view of God. But our faith is different. We find out in God's revealed word that is our Father and we are his children. And that relationship changes everything. Let's unpack that concept.

Paul packs so much into this little reading. Paul is an extremely efficient writer. His writings are God's truth concentrate. To really grasp what he's saying you need to read just a little bit and think about it over and over again. But you also need to look carefully at the context of his writing, because the structure of his letters are such that you need the whole to understand the part. In view of this challenge, could I ask you to read all of Romans this week? This will give you the necessary overview needed to better understand the small chunk we're going to look at today.

So today we have four verses in front of us, and honestly, it's too much for this sermon. We can't possibly look at all the meaning and implications of what Paul says here. But we'll try to wrap our minds around one concept in particular. Adoption. You, through Christ, are adopted into God's family.

Romans 8:14-17 Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him 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, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Adoption as children of God.

"All human beings are God's children!" This is a widespread myth! We are not children of God by nature. *I was just talking to a woman this last week who was telling me about her extended family. She said, "My husband and I are Jewish. But we have relatives who are Buddhist, Christian, Catholic, and some who are atheists. But that's okay. I believe God is one and we are all his children.* This is a common sentiment. But is it true? God created human beings with the *intent* that they would be his children. God *wants* all human beings to be his children. But are we?

Don't kids **look like their parents**? Even when the physical resemblance isn't strong, the mannerisms or way of speaking are similar and obvious. So if everyone is a child of God, then everyone would resemble God. That is, they would be holy as God is holy... perfect as God is perfect... morally upright as God is morally upright... those are the ones who look like Dad. Those are those are the ones who are like the Father.

The truth is, every human being is born with this **natural inclination to rebel** and be independent from God. Think of the teenager who rebels and runs away from home. And his friends say, "Are you parents going to be worried about you?" And he says, "I have no parents! I'm my own man!" This is the attitude we're born with and it's evident every time we sin. Each sin says to God: You're not my Father! I call the shots in my life, not you. I'm my own person. Butt out of my life." What I have just describe is not a child of God. It's a rebel running from God. All people in this world are not children of God... in fact the sad truth is the majority are not.

So how are we adopted into God's family? Kids don't get to adopt themselves into a family, can they? You can't file a claim in court that you have hereby made yourself the adopted child of Warren Buffet. So now you're his heir. It's the parents that choose to adopt a child, not the other way around. So the reality of and consequences of our lack of love, our lack of holiness, our selfishness, our godless living is that we are *not* by nature children of God. And we cannot make ourselves his children.

So how does it happen? God decided to adopt us. God sent his true Son, Jesus, into our world. And he lived like a Son of God! Holy, perfect, wise... a spitting image of his Father. Through his perfect life and innocent death your sins are forgiven. Through God's choice and decision he called you to be his child. Through faith in Christ Jesus, lovingly trusting in Jesus, instead of ourselves, we are children of God. Do you love and trust self? Then you're not a child of God. Love and trust Jesus... you are saved because of what *he* did.

This means that in Christ Jesus you now have a **new relationship** with God! He is our father... daddy. And a *good* one. Some of you have a hard time associating because you don't or didn't have a good father. Just think of all the things your father wasn't (You know perfectly well where he was lacking)... God *is*. Rejoice in your new identity!

There actually many people... even theologians... that are offended if we call God "father." That's too patriarchal! It's too gender specific! Some churches have done away with praying, "Our Father in heaven." And now pray "*Our mother who is within us.*" What's wrong with this? Well the Bible doesn't use this terminology, and neither should we.

God is our **Father**. Not our employer with rules and conditions so we get a bonus and get heaven. God does not work on karma. Help an elderly lady across the street and you'll get a raise at work. God is not a taskmaster. He doesn't put 600 rules on the fridge and say if you do this I'll feed you dinner, and if you don't you'll have hell to pay. This is the kind of God portrayed by false teachers. This is not the God portrayed in the Bible. He's our loving Father who made us his children at the sacrifice of his own Son.

Have you ever seen a good Dad that is more concerned about performance than relationship? What son sends reports back to his dad about accomplishments, glowing peer reviews, growing net worth... that's it... and the Dad is happy with that? Doesn't the dad want a relationship? Doesn't he want love and closeness with his son? Are we so busy about our performance that we forget what our real relationship with God is? That we forget to spend quality time with our heavenly Dad? In church. In prayer. In Bible study.

Adoption has privileges. Briefly, what are the privileges of being an adopted child of the almighty creator of the universe?

1. **Saved** by the power of the Holy Spirit, through the redeeming work of the Son to have a loving relationship with the Father who created you.
2. Constant, immediate, intimate **access** to the Father! (Abba)
3. **Heirs** of God, co-heirs of Jesus.
4. **Security**. No fear. Spirit bears witness... we are God's children. (Social security? How about divine security?) Certain. No question. Not based on what we do... that's a fear system. Based on what Christ has done. That's security.

5. Living in **loving obedience to God** is yet another privilege of being an adopted child of God (not a condition for becoming an adopted child of God.) When you are not God's child, there can be no loving obedience to him... only rebellion... or perhaps *fearful* obedience. But because you're confident of his love, you love to obey. That's the Christian life as adopted children of God. Because we have a relationship with God established by grace through the sacrifice of his Son, we want to please our Father. We want to be near our Father. We know that disobedience drives us away from our Father and we distance ourselves from him. We don't like that. We don't want that. He loves us and we now love him. We are his adopted children so we want to be close to him. We want to communicate with him. We want to know what he wants. We want to do what he wants. We love his love and we don't want anything to get in the way of it!
6. And **other privileges** not specifically listed in our text, so we're not going to talk about them in detail... presence, acceptance, encouragement, gifts, more!

But let's be clear about one other reality of being an adopted child of God. In this life you can expect suffering. Some people think that when they suffer God is mad. Or God has left them. But the truth is, our suffering in this world, especially for the Good News of Jesus, is another indicator that we are children of God. You're a brother or sister of Jesus. You're a close relative. If he suffered, isn't it logical that you will too? So worldly trials come with adoption into God's family. But the heavenly reward makes them all worthwhile.

CONCLUSION: God is your Father. What does this look like? Imagine an esteemed judge with a young family. In the courtroom he is addressed as "your honor." People respect him by standing when he enters the room. No one approaches him without permission. He is the feared authority and all submit to it because they must. It's the law! But when he gets home, he opens the front door and there is his 6 year old son and 3 year old daughter. Do they formally rise at his entrance and say, "Welcome home, your honor." And he sternly says, "Be seated!" as he walks past them. No! They see him and shout, Daddy! They run to him fearlessly and joyfully and wrap their arms around him and kiss him. No one has done that all day long! Not remotely! They would have been ejected from the courtroom if they had. But his children are different. They have a totally different relationship. Friends, that's your relationship with the almighty creator of the universe... his is your daddy. And he adores you. And he looks forward to spending time with you. And he loves your attention. But above anything, he'll give anything for you and your protection and your safety. And he already has... it took the perfect life and innocent death of God's Son Jesus to bring you and I in as adopted children. We had to be made suitable for God's family, and that meant we needed to be like our Father... sinless, pure, blameless. In Christ Jesus, we are just that. And now that we're in, we're loved and protected and showered with attention.

Rejoice: The Father, Son and Holy Spirit- the triune God- has worked to adopt you. You are children of almighty God. Amen.