

Introduction: We return to the Prologue of John's Gospel in order to find more treasures in the deep mine contained in John 1:12-13's description of the grace of adoption. May the Lord give us a rich, and ever-deepening assurance that, as God's adopted children, we have bold and immediate access to our Savior and to our Father's mercy seat to help us in our time of need.

**Monday: read John 1:12-14 & John 1:18.** We begin deliberately with John's emphasis on the Son's revelation of His Father in John 1:18, a verse which tells us that *the only means by which we can experience, understand and savingly receive the grace of God in adoption is by God's Son revealing the Father to us!*

In other words, we rejoice at the Word made flesh, because that Word is God's Son come down to our lost world to save us by His words, works and wisdom. This is the Incarnation – God coming close to us in our need - as close as taking our real humanity as His own!

But we also know from verse 18 that Christ has come down "from the bosom of the Father" with a comprehensive knowledge of God the Father's will and wisdom, so that He is able to save us *comprehensively* because of the depth of His knowledge of God the Father's plan and because of His full share of the Father's wisdom. The Son simply knows *all there is to know* about our plight and our needs because He has learned everything "at the Father's side" as the ESV of verse 18 puts it. It is one thing for a young and eager volunteer from the fire department to show up at our car accident – it is something else entirely for the EMT who knows everything there is to know about medicine to arrive and provide effective care. Just so with the Son of God – No one else knows the Father as He does, and therefore, for us to be *adopted* into Christ's family means being adopted *through Christ's rich knowledge* of God's Triune nature and purposes. Christ was born to *reveal to us* all that He knows as being, "from the Father's side"!

Meditate and Pray: Because Christ Jesus was a "straight-A student" when it came to creating the world and delighting with His Father in that creation, (see Proverbs 8:31), we are not surprised that He demonstrates the same work-ethic in knowing all about us as fallen and lost sinners. Full of the healing and saving wisdom of God, He can place His shepherding hands right on the areas of our lives where we are most damaged by sin. This is why He is called, "The Good Physician!" Now we also know from John 1:18 that He studied at the best schools in order to learn His craft of saving lost souls: "At the Father's Side." Here then are some words from an old hymn which speak so clearly about Christ's saving knowledge of us and our plight:

*At evening, ere the sun was set,  
The sick, O Lord, around Thee lay;  
O, with how many pains they met!  
O, with what joy they went away!*

*O Savior Christ, our woes dispel;  
For some are sick, and some are sad;  
And some have never loved Thee well,  
And some have lost the love they had.*

*And some have found the world is vain,  
Yet from the world they break not free;  
And some have friends who give them pain,  
Yet have not sought a friend in Thee.*

*Once more 'tis eventide, and we,  
Oppressed with various ills, draw near;  
What if Thyself we cannot see?  
We know that Thou art ever near.*

*And some are pressed with worldly care  
And some are tried with sinful doubt;  
And some such grievous passions tear,  
That only Thou canst cast them out*

*And none, O Lord, have perfect rest,  
For none are wholly free from sin;  
And they who fain would serve Thee best  
Are conscious most of wrong within.*

*O Savior Christ, Thou too art man;  
Thou has been troubled, tempted, tried;  
Thy kind but searching glance can scan  
The very wounds that shame would hide.*

*Thy touch has still its ancient power.  
No word from Thee can fruitless fall;  
Hear, in this solemn evening hour,  
And in Thy mercy heal us all.*

**Prayer:** “Oh Lord, these words from this old hymn give us hope that you know just how to help us with our deepest sins and crimes. We would in shame hide what we really are from others. Apart from your touch, and your Spirit working in us, there is nothing good that we can find in our lives. Thank you that you are the God who heals, and thank you Jesus, that we can find in the Bible the exact ‘Name of Salvation’ which suits our difficulties just now. You are all we need. Please work in us your perfect salvation. In Your Name we pray, Amen.”

**Tues/Weds: read John 1:12-14 & 1 John 3:1.** What then are we by faith to do with this knowledge of God the Father which Christ reveals to us? The answer in John 1:12 is that we are to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel, thereby receiving His saving work to make us God’s children. By such faith, John declares that we receive the right and authority to be called, “children of God.” What does it mean to be given that right? What does it mean to authoritatively be given a new name as God’s adopted children? Let us explore John 1:12 more.

First of all, when John 1:12 speaks about us “becoming children of God”, this means the new birth by the Holy Spirit, whereby we are “born of God” in John 1:13, not born of a father’s will or merely by flesh and blood but born by the Spirit! The result is that we are translated from *our old, condemned family in Adam* into the family of the Kingdom of God. No longer are we called “guilty sons of Adam”, doomed to be punished because of our original sin and the fallen nature we inherit from him. Rather, we now know the amazing love by which we are “called children of God” (1 John 3:1)! John Owen speaks about what we receive through adoption in volume 2 of his works (207-222). What does it mean to be called children of God? It means that:

- 1) Our names are *enrolled* in the household of God, as we are admitted into fellowship with God’s heavenly family, and given the same name “beloved children” which they enjoy (Ephesians 3:15).
- 2) We are given an *inheritance* in God’s promises; in Christ’s saving righteousness and in a full and certain hope of eternal life! (See Galatians 3:29; Hebrews 11:7 & Titus 3:7).
- 3) We now enjoy *liberty* from the bondage of Adam and Satan (Hebrews 2:14-15, Romans 8:15), and *liberty to walk in joyful obedience* in God’s ways by His Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:17 & Psalm 119:45).
- 4) We now have God’s Law *written on our hearts*. Because we have a “heart-transplant” into a new spiritual family, we are *free from the Law* in terms of its rigor and terror (Hebrews 12:18-22).
- 5) We inherit a legal, rock-solid standing as God’s adopted children – with *no possibility of this adoption being revoked!* God has declared us to be His own! Christ has owned us as His brothers and sisters – and has declared this to Satan, and to all who had prior claims on us (Hebrews 2:11-13 & Ephesians 3:10-12).
- 6) We now have a new name, as evidence that we belong to this family of God through Jesus’ blood – see Revelation 2:17! (This white stone was the way, in ancient Roman courts in John’s day, you would declared “not guilty!” Instead of the black stone signifying guilt, we now have the white stone of being acquitted in God’s court and received as His children.

**Thurs/Fri: read Ephesians 1:3-5; 2:19 & 1 John 3:1.** How our security from the LORD will grow the more we think of our free and permanent adoption into God's family through Jesus Christ! We can speak of this adoption as free and permanent because it is guaranteed to bring us into the full possession of all the rights of God's children saved by grace. Sometimes the preachers of old called this "special adoption" to differentiate it from the "general adoption" by which God claimed all of Israel as His adopted children – even though many did not have saving faith, (1 Corinthians 10:1-5). Just like today, there are many who boast of an outward religion, but can be counted as God's own *only because they make an outward show of religion*. But those who believe in their hearts enjoy the "special adoption" which comes by faith. Here is how Fisher's commentary on the Shorter Catechism Question 34 describes this "special adoption":

**QUESTION 34.** *What is adoption?*

**ANSWER:** Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.

**Q.** What is to be understood by special adoption? **A.** It is a sovereign and free translation of a sinner ... from the family of hell into the family of heaven, or household of God, [Eph. 2:19](#); with ... all the privileges of the sons of God, [1 John 3:1](#).

**Q.** What is the act of the Father in this matter? **A.** He has "predestinated us unto the adoption of children to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will," [Eph. 1:5](#).

**Q.** What is the act of the Son in this special adoption? **A.** In consequence of his purchasing the sinner by the price of his blood, he actually gives the power, right, or privilege, to become a child of God, in the day of believing, [John 1:12](#).

**Q.** What is the act of the Holy Ghost? **A.** He comes in Christ's name, takes possession of the person, and dwells in him, as a Spirit of adoption, teaching him to cry, Abba, Father, [Rom. 8:15](#).

**Q.** Why is this special adoption called an act of *God's free grace*? **A.** Because the adoption of any of mankind into the household of God, flows entirely from his own free love and favor, [Eph. 1:5](#), they being, all of them, wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, [Rev. 3:17](#).

**Sat/Sun: read Ephesians 1:5-6 & John 1:12-13.** Perhaps the most important phrase to sum up this week's notes on adoption is "free grace", since this saving adoption flows entirely from God's unearned love and favor, and not at all from us, who have nothing but wretchedness, depravity, guilt, spiritual poverty, blindness and naked shame to offer in this transaction. Even more amazing – how wonderful that this adoption is a status conferred freely, (just like justification), and therefore can never be revoked *by our failure to live up to our high status* or *because of the Satanic accusations of failure which the Devil is sure to level against us*. Most poignant of all, *when we believe we are disqualified from being God's child*, God simply will not hear all our arguments as to why we are unworthy to be called His son or daughter! Just as the father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son would not hear his son's request to be made merely an undeserving slave (Luke 15:20-24), so the Father in Heaven insists on making us His "favorites", since we are in Christ, and God can never cease delighting in Him.

Meditate and Pray: What a simple, child-like faith we are to have in God's eternal Fatherhood towards us, and in Christ's commitment to call us part of His family. Listen to close out this week's notes to John Owen again:

*"In all the adopted Children of God's approaches to God, they eye Him as a Father; they call Him Father, Gal. 4:6, not in the form of words, but in the spirit of sons. God in Christ is continually before them; not only as One deserving all the honors and obedience He requires, but also as One exceedingly to be delighted in, as being all-sufficient to satisfy and satiate all the desires of the soul. When others napkin their talents, as having to deal with an austere master (Mt. 25:24), the truly adopted ones by faith exert their strength to the uttermost, as drawing nigh to a gracious rewarder. They go in the way of obedience, enervated by the inward principle of life and love in Christ, to the bosom of a living and loving Father. They do but return the strength they do receive unto the fountain, unto the ocean."* JOHN OWEN VOL 2, PG. 215