

# RECONCILIATION, ADOPTION, NEW NATURE

## RECONCILIATION

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- Definition: A change in relationship or attitude from enmity to peace; the cessation of hostility in attitude or action; a return to favor with; to make things right with one another
- Reconciliation means “to reestablish proper friendly interpersonal relations after these have been disrupted or broken - the componential features of this series of meanings involve (1) disruption of friendly relations because of (2) presumed or real provocation, (3) overt behavior designed to remove hostility, and (4) restoration of original friendly relations (Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament)
- Biblically, then, reconciliation is the restoration of fellowship by the removal of sin
- Reconciliation is a central doctrine of Christianity. Specifically, in Christ God reconciled the sinful, hostile world to himself by Christ’s taking upon himself the cost of our hostility and enmity, thereby setting the world free to restored union with God...The foundational assumption of the gospel is that only God can bear and remove the consequences of human enmity toward God and the resulting separation from God; therefore God alone can effect this change in relationship (Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms)
- Man, who was estranged and alienated from God, is now at peace with Him

**Romans 5:10** ~ For if while we were enemies were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

- We were alienated from God! – We were His enemies!
- Earlier in Romans Paul demonstrates that we are the ones who ran from God:
  - Romans 1: Men suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness...They knew God but did not honor Him...They exchanged truth of God for a lie, worshipping creature rather than creator
  - Romans 3: There are none righteous, not even one; none who seek God; none who do good, not even one
- Outside of Christ a person is hostile toward God and actually hates Him
- Through his rebellion in the garden, man moved out of fellowship with God and needed to return to fellowship...This is only possible through Christ!

**Romans 5:11** ~ And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation

- Reconciliation is God providing peace where previously there was enmity and God restoring man to fellowship with Himself
- Reconciliation turns alienated parties back to each other
- Notice that we are passive in this reconciliation – we receive the reconciliation!
- Thus, when a person comes to Christ by faith God’s work of reconciliation is appropriated to him and he then has fellowship with God and the spiritual enmity is removed

**Romans 11:15** ~ For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will *their* acceptance be but life from the dead?

- Because of Israel’s rejection, the reconciling Gospel was taken to the Gentiles

**2 Corinthians 5:18-19** ~ Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

- Notice: We need to be reconciled to God, not He to us...God is not reconciled, nor does He reconcile himself, but He reconciles us to Himself
- Notice also:

### 1. Reconciliation is by the desire of God – vs. 18a

- Reconciliation begins with God...it is He who initiates it
- The rebellious sinner who is dead in their trespasses and sin and therefore an enemy of God cannot reconcile themselves to God
- They are unable to effect any change in their relationship with God
- It is by the sovereign act of God by which sinners are reconciled to Him
- If we are to be saved, it will come only through His breaking into our situation and changing us from His enemies to His friends

### 2. Reconciliation is by the death of Christ – vs. 18b

**2 Corinthians 5:21** ~ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

- When Christ died an incredible transaction occurred => God treated Christ as if he were a sinner so that He could treat us as if we lived a perfect life

### 3. Reconciliation is by the deliverance from sin – vs. 19

- Those sins which once separated us from God and made us His enemy have been removed
- Redemption and propitiation make reconciliation possible:
  - Redemption involves the payment of a price to release us from sin and to become God's possession; It stresses aspects of the cross-work of Christ that negate our misery in sin, our slavery to a master that can do no good for us, and our hopelessness
  - Propitiation describes a payment toward God to turn away His wrath against sin; The wrath of God against our sin has been satisfied and removed through Christ's work on the cross
- In redemption, God redeems us as He satisfies His requirements
- In propitiation, He satisfies His wrath against our sin
- In reconciliation, God removes our hostility toward Him
- Notice too that, believers have been entrusted with the "word of reconciliation" – we are called to proclaim the gospel of reconciliation to others!

**Ephesians 2:11-16** ~ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands – 12 *remember* that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity

- Paul demonstrates the change wrought by Christ in the relationship of men to God
- This passage strongly insists on the divine initiative in the process of reconciliation – the whole process is described from the point of view of Christ and men are not said to do anything in the matter

**Colossians 1:21-22** ~ For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven. 21 And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, *engaged* in evil deeds, 22 yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach

- Once more the stress is on the activity of God...it was His good pleasure that reconciliation should occur and the emphasis throughout the passage is on what He has done, not on any puny effort of man
- Again, notice the means this reconciliation occurs: “through the blood of his cross....through death”
- Reconciliation is closely tied with the death of the Lord and the implication is that this death really did something by way of removing barriers
- What does it mean “through Him to reconcile all things to Himself”?
  - Eventually all things in the created universe will be reconciled to Christ (Romans 8:21)
  - All people will eventually submit to Christ – some willingly, some unwillingly (Phil 2:9-11)

## ADOPTION

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- Reconciliation makes adoption possible
- The word *adoption* (*huiiothesia*) means “placing as a son” and describes the rights and privileges as well as the new position of the believer in Christ.
- The word is taken from Roman custom where, in a legal ceremony, the adopted son was given all the rights of a natural-born son.
- In this rite, four things happened:
  1. The adopted person lost all rights in his old family, and gained all the rights of a fully legitimate son in his new family
  2. He became heir to his new father's estate
  3. The old life of the adopted person was completely wiped out. For instance, legally all debts were cancelled; they were wiped out as if they had never been.
  4. By the law, the adopted person was literally and absolutely the son of his new father
- Paul employs this Roman background to describe the Christian's new status in Christ.
- In adoption the believer is released from slavery into freedom and maturity in Christ
- Definition: Adoption is God's act of making otherwise estranged human beings part of God's spiritual family by including them as inheritors of the riches of divine glory (Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms)

### Adoption is Secured in the Past

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- The act of adoption is connected with predestination, having taken place in eternity past but realized when the person believes in Jesus Christ.

**Ephesians 1:5** ~ predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

### Adoption Places the Believer in God's Family

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- God lovingly freed us from the bonds of slavery and put us in His family to be His children

- He took children who were not His children and made them His own and treated them as if they were His children
- In short, God adopted all those who would believe in Him and treated them as if they were his natural sons and daughters

**John 1:12** ~ But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who believe in His name

**1 John 3:1** ~ See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called **children of God**; and *such* we are.

**Romans 8:14-17** ~ For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are **sons of God**. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as **sons** by which we cry out, “Abba! **Father!**” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are **children of God**, and if **children, heirs** also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

**Galatians 4:1-7** ~ Now I say, as long as the heir is a child, he does not differ at all from a slave although he is owner of everything, but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by the father. So also we, while we were children, were held in bondage under the elemental things of the world. But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive **the adoption as sons**. Because you are **sons**, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a **son**; and if a **son**, then an heir through God.

- Notice: There is a subtle transition in this text: vs. 1 and 3 refer to children; vs. 4-7 refer to sons
- “children” refers to young children; “son” refers to adult children
- “children” refers to us when we were unbelievers...when we were dead in our sin and slaves to it → vs. 3 ~ we were children held in bondage under the elemental things of the world
- But “sons” refer to us when we were adopted by God through the work of Christ
- So once we were helpless little children stumbling around in a dark world trying to earn our way to God through our own works...but now in Christ, we are adopted as sons! – fully complete in Christ
- The theme of this whole section is sonship – adoption as sons (and daughters) of God
- In 4 verses (vs. 4-7) the word “son” occurs 6 times
  - 2 times it refers to Christ (vs. 4 ~ God sent forth His Son; vs. 6 ~ God sent forth the Spirit of His Son)
  - 4 times it refers to those made God’s sons through adoption (vs. 5 ~ adoption as sons; vs. 6 ~ because you are sons; vs. 7 ~ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God)
- Don’t miss the connection between these uses of the word “son”
- God sent His one and only natural Son so that we could become God’s adopted sons
- No member of the human race is a natural son of God – there is only 1 natural son of God – Christ!
- Christ is the only Son of God by nature – Jesus is NOT God’s adopted Son...He is God’s natural Son
- And it is His death and resurrection that makes the adoption of all of us unnatural children who believe possible
- The glorious truth of the Bible is that God is an adopting-God
- He lovingly takes those who are not His own children and he places them in His family as if they are His children
- We who were not God’s children have been adopted by Him and given all the rights and privileges of natural children
- Adoption involves receiving a relationship with our Heavenly Father!!

## **Blessings Flow from Being Adopted by God**

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- In adoption, those who are not natural children become as if they are natural children with all the blessings that come with it
- That's exactly what happens when God adopts children into His family
- Those who have no right to be in His family are adopted in such that they have all the blessings that come from being in the family of God

### ***We Receive the Spirit***

**Galatians 4:6** ~ Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

- The Roman process of adoption requires the presence of seven witnesses
- Their testimony was important because if, after the adoptive parent's death, his natural children contested the validity of the adoption, the witnesses had to testify that a valid adoption had taken place
- In the same way, we have a witness that testifies to the validity of our adoption by God
- The one who testifies that our adoption is valid and true is none other than God Himself!
- God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts!
- The Holy Spirit is present in every true child of God to give evidence of their position in God's family

**Romans 8:16** ~ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God

### ***We Call God "Father"***

**Galatians 4:6** ~ God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"

- The crying here in this verse is done by the Holy Spirit
- Because the Spirit is God, He can call out to God and call Him "Father"
- Because the Holy Spirit lives in us and has taken us residence in our hearts as a confirmation that we have been adopted by God, we also can cry out to God "Abba Father"
- The result of the Holy Spirit in our hearts is that we have a close intimate relationship with God the Father

**Romans 8:15** ~ For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

- The Holy Spirit enables us to cry out "Abba Father" (Abba = Aramaic for "daddy, papa")

### ***We Become Heirs***

**Galatians 4:7** ~ Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

- The result of this is that we become partakers of God's inheritance

**Romans 8:17** ~ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ

- We become fellow heirs with Christ...we stand to inherit everything the Christ possesses
- The sons of God get to inherit everything the Son of God gets to inherit → salvation, glory, heaven, the universe, and God Himself

## Complete Adoption is Yet Future

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**Romans 8:23** ~ And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

- Adoption began in eternity past when he marked out those who would be His children
- It occurs in the present by being redeemed by Christ
- And it reaches its final fulfillment in eternity future
- Spiritual adoption spans the ages – it began in eternity past and extends into eternity future!

## THE NEW NATURE

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**Romans 6:6** ~ For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—

**2 Corinthians 5:17** ~ Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature

**Galatians 2:20** ~ I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

**2 Peter 1:4** ~ For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature...

- These texts indicate that believers have a completely new nature
- The question often comes up do...do believers have a sinful nature?
- Some will read Romans 7:18, 25; 8:1-12; Galatians 5:13 and assume believers do have a sinful nature
- Unfortunately, poor translation (NIV and others) has led many to conclude that believers do have a sinful nature—this is seriously wrong and is more than mere semantics.
- The Greek word at issue is *sarx* and has a basic meaning of “flesh” or “body.” To translate it as “sinful nature” or “old man” is unwarranted and taking liberties with the text.
- There is another word for “nature” that Paul could have used (*phusis*) - (Rom 2:14, Gal. 2:15, Eph. 2:3).
- He didn’t use this word for nature because that was not what he was talking about. He was talking about the flesh.
- At salvation, the sinful nature of believers was crucified so that we no longer are who we once were.
- To say that believers have a sinful nature not only denies the clear teaching of Scripture, but makes us spiritual schizophrenics vacillating between two competing natures.
- We certainly do have a “flesh” that we must drag around with us until we are glorified.
- This flesh does constantly tempt us to sin and is really at the core of all temptations.

**1 John 2:16** ~ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

- The Christian will constantly battle the desires of his flesh while on this earth.

**Romans 7:18, 23** ~ For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not...but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.

- However, the believer can see victory over the flesh through Christ (though not perfectionism in this life.)

**Romans 7:24, 25** ~ Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?...Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.

