

## **That's Gospel!**

### **Study 8: Adopted<sup>1</sup>**

Do you know who you are? Do you know who you were designed to be? Do you know the Father's intent for your life? You are meant to hear in your spirit the same thing Jesus heard when he came out of the waters of baptism at the beginning of his ministry: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). Romans 8:15-16 attests to the highest privilege of the Christian life and the deepest longing of our hearts: knowing God as our perfect Father. "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the spirit of sonship [adoption]. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children." J.I. Packer puts it simply, "What is a Christian? The question can be answered in many ways, but the richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God for his Father."<sup>2</sup> In other words, we are designed to live in a family.

Our highest privilege and deepest need is to experience the holy God as our loving Father, to approach him without fear and to be assured of his fatherly care and concern. Scripture teaches that our Father can be the same one Jesus had. Paul tells us that the indwelling Holy Spirit causes us to cry out, "Abba, Father," words spoken by Jesus. In the garden of Gethsemane just hours before his crucifixion, Jesus poured out

his soul to his Father. Mark tells us that Jesus threw Himself to the ground not far from his dozing disciples. In evident pain he cried out, "Abba, Father.... Take this cup from me [the cup of his sacrificial death]. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). What is unusual here is the way Jesus addresses God. Abba is an Aramaic word that expresses an intimate family relationship, a word used by a completely trusting and dependent child wholly secure in the loving arms of a father.

How did the Father feel about His Son? At the beginning of his public ministry Jesus presented himself for baptism to John the Baptist. As Jesus came out of the water, a dove representing the Holy Spirit descended on Him, and a voice spoke from the heavens. Matthew records this as an announcement of God's pleasure with his Son: "This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Mark records the message as a more personal statement from Father to Son: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Mark 1:11). When the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our lives, we too can cry, "Abba, Father." The same Spirit that proceeds from the relationship between the Father and Son is implanted in us. The difference between Jesus and us is that He is the natural Son of the Father, whereas we are adopted into the family through His sacrifice. We are all spiritual orphans. Our rebellious and sinful nature cut us off from God the Father. The Bible says quite clearly that we are not born children of God and therefore must go through an adoption process. The price of our adoption was the death of God's Son. C.S. Lewis wrote, "The Son of God became a man to enable men to become the sons of God."<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> This study has been adapted from Steve Hart. *GospelBasics*. Soma Communities. 2014.

<sup>2</sup> J.I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 181.

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<sup>3</sup> C.S. Lewis, quoted in *Hymns for the Family of God* (Nashville: Paragon, 1976), p. 167.

good news is that when we recognize that we are spiritual orphans in need of the Father, we can go through the Son. When we acknowledge that our sin has severed the relationship with the Father, that Jesus is the gracious payment for our sin and then accept the gift of forgiveness offered by inviting the Spirit of Jesus into our life, then we can cry, “Abba, Father.” We are at home at last, welcomed into God’s family.

As adopted children we can enjoy the same favor that Jesus has with the Father. We too are the apple of God’s eye, the pleasure of His love, the delight of His focus. And if we didn’t get all that we wanted or needed in our human fathers, we are invited even more deeply into the pleasure that the Father of heaven and earth takes in his Son, and us. We have been included in the family and hear the Father say, “You are my child, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” We now have the Father we always needed and wanted. But that’s not where the text ends. If we are full-fledged members of the family, there is an inheritance waiting for us. “If we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and coheirs with Christ” (Romans 9:17). We have been included in the will and stand to inherit such things as resurrection bodies that do not decay, and a new heaven and new earth, for starters. The will also mentions that we’ll have a family to spend eternity with, in a life free of pain, crying, disease and death. But that’s still not the best part. The best part is that we are heirs of God. The will reads: “I, God, bequeath myself to you for all eternity.” We are heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, and therefore we get in on all that Jesus inherits. When Jesus was in the upper room before going to the cross, he longed to return to the presence of his Father. He prayed in John 17:5, “Father, glorify me in your


presence with the glory that I had with you before the world began.”

Jesus was looking forward to the joy on the other side of the cross. The writer of Hebrews says that “for the joy set before him [Jesus] endured the cross” (Hebrews 12:2). As coheirs with Jesus we get to share in the glory that the Father bestows on the Son. As Jesus prayed moments before his arrest, He made our inheritance with Him plain: “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world” (John 17:24). Jesus wraps up His prayer by asking the Father to bestow on us the same love that He has for Jesus: “I have made you known to them...in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them” (v. 26). We are drawn into the family circle and get to enjoy the spillover of the Father’s love for the Son.

As we bring this section on the message of Christ to a close, we end where we started. We began examining the meaning of being created in the image of God and discovered that this meant we were created for relationship. To be adopted into God’s family is to be restored to paradise lost. God sent Jesus as the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) to restore the image of God in us. We find our way home only when the Holy Spirit comes to take residence in us and we cry out, “Abba, Father.” Welcome home!

#### **Scripture Reading: Romans 8, ESV**

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you<sup>[b]</sup> free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By

sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup>in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. <sup>5</sup>For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. <sup>6</sup>For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup>For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. <sup>8</sup>Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup>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. <sup>10</sup>But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup>If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. Heirs with Christ <sup>12</sup>So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. <sup>13</sup>For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup>For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons  of God. <sup>15</sup>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!" <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. <sup>19</sup>For the creation waits with eager

longing for the revealing of the sons of God. <sup>20</sup>For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup>that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. <sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup>And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. <sup>26</sup>Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <sup>27</sup>And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. <sup>28</sup>And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified. <sup>31</sup>What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died — more than that, who was raised — who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup>Who

shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.”

<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### Scripture Meditation: Romans 8:37-39

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### Partner Assignment: Orphans vs. Children

According to the chart, our biggest struggles in life come from not being convinced that we really are fully known and accepted by God through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. Do you agree or disagree? Why?

ORPHANS Vs. CHILDREN OF GOD<sup>4</sup>

Orphan	Child of God
Feels alone. Lacks a vital daily intimacy with God. Is full of self-concern.	Has a growing assurance that “God is really my loving heavenly Father.”

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from Sonship and The Gospel-Centered Life by World Harvest Mission.

Anxious over felt needs: relationships, money, health. “I’m all alone and nobody cares. I’m not a happy camper.”	Trusts the Father and has a growing confidence in his loving care. Is being freed up from worry.
Feels condemned, guilty, and unworthy before God and others.	Feels loved, forgiven, and totally accepted because Christ’s merit really clothes them.
Only uses “God” or “Lord” when praying. Going to God in prayer is a last resort.	Calls God “Father” or “Dad” in prayer. Turns to God in prayer first in times of need.
The Bible’s promises of spiritual power and joy are empty.	God’s transforming power and joy are regular experiences.
Avoids spending time with God.	Enjoys spending time with God.
Lacks passion to share the gospel. The Christian life isn’t experienced as good news.	Loves talking about Jesus. The gospel is experienced as good news here and now.
Seeks satisfaction in physical pleasure.	Is satisfied in God’s love.
Insecure in relationships. Concerned about being left out or neglected.	Content in relationships. Able to focus on others rather than self.
Is often defensive when sensing criticism. Often goes into protection mode.	Doesn’t fear criticism because well acquainted with both sin and grace. Knows that God is protector.
Have a hard time giving thanks or praising God.	Find numerous reasons to rejoice in God from a good meal to a sunny day.

1. As you look through this list of descriptions, which can you relate with more? Why or why not?
2. For those characteristics that you struggle with the most, how would embracing your identity as a dearly loved child of God make a difference?
3. According to the chart, one of our biggest struggles in life come from not being convinced that we really are fully known and accepted by God through the work of Jesus Christ on our behalf. How can you practically and spiritually begin to let go of the “orphan mentality and spirit” and embrace sonship and daughtership in God more fully from now on?

#### **Questions for Discussion: Study 8, Adopted**

1. If you were able to meet with your prayer partner last week, what did God speak to you or show you through the assignment?
2. How have you grown in your understanding of these statements through the study of Romans 1-8: The gospel is the message or “good news” about what has been accomplished on our behalf, though we’ve done nothing to earn or merit it. Rather, through faith in Jesus Christ, (that is, by trusting our lives to his work on our behalf) we receive the following benefits: *I.* We have been saved from the penalty of sin because of Jesus’ life and death. (Past) (Justification) (Romans 3-5) *II.* We are being saved from the power of sin because of Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. (Present) (Sanctification) (Romans 6-8)

*III.* We will be saved from the presence of sin because of Jesus’ return. (Future) (Glorification)

3. Which statement or theological term have you started to really understand and its made a difference in your relationship with Christ and others?

#### **Post-Article Questions:**

1. Any comments or thoughts from the article?
2. Take a look at the chart on *Orphans Vs. Children of God*. Which box or boxes are you currently thriving in the most and struggling in the most? How could truly walking in faith in your identity as a son or daughter of God make a difference in your day to day and relationships?

#### **Post-Scripture Questions:**

1. The “therefore” is there for a reason. Why is there now no condemnation for those who are in Christ? (Romans chapters 1-7)
2. How does Romans 8:1 affect the way you view yourself and others?
3. From Romans 8:14-17, list the privileges of adoption into God’s family. (Romans 8:29 also)
4. Read Galatians 4:1-7. Compare this with Romans 8:17, what does it mean to be a co-heir with Christ? How has this revelation changed the way you have live?
5. Read some of the additional benefits of being a child of God and discuss how these benefits have changed your life: Matthew 6:7-8, 10: 29-31; Hebrews 12:7-11; and 1 John 3:1-3
6. From Romans 8:23-25, who and what groans in these verses and why?
7. What do Christians hope for and how are they to wait?

8. Can you describe a time in your life you were asked to wait on God patiently? What were the positive results and impacts from that? What is God asking you to wait for now and how are you demonstrating patience in a practical and spiritual way?
9. What can we learn about God's attributes and character from Romans 8:28? How does this verse impact your heart and mind towards God and your current difficult situations?

In Closing:

Go around and share what each person will take away from the study of Romans 8 and of Romans 1-8 this semester. Close in a time of prayer for one another.