Adopted

"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!'" (Romans 8:15, ESV)

There are many ways Scripture describes what God has done for us in salvation.

We are justified. We are redeemed. We are reconciled. We are regenerated. We are sanctified.

And we are adopted.

It is possible to move too quickly past that last word.

Justification addresses our standing before God. The guilty sinner is declared righteous on the basis of the righteousness of Christ. Regeneration addresses our spiritual condition. Those who were spiritually dead are made alive. Adoption addresses something different.

It addresses our relationship.

God brings us into His family.

Paul writes that God *"predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will."* (Ephesians 1:5, ESV)

Notice those words: to himself.

God could have forgiven us without giving us the privileges of sons. He could have pardoned the guilty and left them standing outside the household. He could have treated us as servants who had been spared punishment.

But salvation goes further than pardon.

The Judge who declares us righteous receives us as Father.

That is why Paul's words in Romans are so remarkable. The believer has received *"the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"* (Romans 8:15, ESV)

Abba was a personal and familial way of addressing one's father. It should not be reduced to a childish familiarity that removes reverence. The God whom we call Father remains the holy, sovereign Creator of heaven and earth.

But neither should we remove the intimacy from Paul's language.

The Christian does not stand at a distance wondering whether he may approach. Through Christ he has been brought into the family. The Holy Spirit Himself bears witness *"with our spirit that we are children of God."* (Romans 8:16, ESV)

We may call Him Father.

Think about that.

The One who spoke the universe into existence is Father.

The One before whom angels worship is Father.

The One who is holy, holy, holy is Father.

And the relationship is not temporary.

Paul continues:

"And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ." (Romans 8:17, ESV)

Children inherit.

The Christian has not merely been rescued from something. He has been brought into something. He has a Father, a family, and an inheritance.

John expresses the wonder of it:

"See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are." (1 John 3:1, ESV)

And so we are.

There is something wonderfully final about those words.

The gospel does not teach that every person is naturally a child of God in this redemptive sense. John says that those who received Christ and believed in His name were given *"the right to become children of God."* (John 1:12, ESV)

Become.

Adoption establishes a relationship that did not previously exist.

Yesterday an enemy; now reconciled.

Yesterday condemned; now justified.

Yesterday outside the household; now a son.

And because we are sons, we do not merely know something about God.

We know Him as Father.

The gospel tells the believer something even more wonderful than, "You are forgiven."

It tells him:

"You are family."

Just a thought.

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John L. Wheeler

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