

Adopting Grace from the Father Who Chose Us (Eph. 1:4-5)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on October 17, 2010

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In the Providence of God this day our church family celebrates the baby dedication for two of our members as parents of their newly adopted son to their family, Ben and Ashley and little Josiah. Our *church family* welcomes and rejoices with them today. On this day Dean and Bonnie, who some of you know have 2 adopted daughters from Korea, this day also marks a special day in their family, as their daughter Sarah is meeting them at the SF Airport today with her newly adopted son from Korea named Charlie (Dean and Bonnie's newest grandson).

I hope you're also aware of and in prayer for others in our midst in the midst of adoption, like Craig and Jennifer, who are awaiting final provision and preparations and God's providence to help them bring home Nicholas and Abigail from an orphanage in Uganda (you can talk with me or them more today to learn more). Later today, closer to midnight, Jeanne will also be flying in from Asia, where she's been helping missionaries at an orphanage as a sent-one from our church through your support and prayers, and you can pray for all those travels as you think of it. As Jeanne shared with us, that orphanage has had families in our Christian community adopt or in process of adopting, including people close to or related to some of you in this room. Today also we'll get to hear in our PM service about the orphanage and church work in the Congo at Pastor Didier's compound from Ray and how we can be praying for and supporting those brethren further.

This is a special time for our church family and it is my special joy and privilege to speak to you on this special subject from the Word of a God who reveals that He has a special place in His heart for orphans and others in need, which is very good news for us who are spiritually that way. And the heart of God's dealings with Israel in the OT and the church in the NT is at the heart of this passage:

Eph 1:4 says of God the Father: "... *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love* ⁵ *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will ...*

John Newton's mother died when he was only 6 years old. He had a father who was not really a father or positive influence. Before mom's death, she had diligently taught him the *Shorter Catechism*, and he memorized and could reply if you asked him the questions:

- Q34: What is adoption? 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.
- Q36: What are the benefits ... [of adoption and its related aspects of salvation]? ... assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy [Spirit], increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end.

As a very young boy, Newton knew at least intellectually more of this doctrine than many who sit in churches today, but he did not know it spiritually truly until many years later. He writes of a lady who 'seemed willing **to adopt and bring me up**; but, after two or three years, she had a son of her own, who engrossed the old gentleman's notice ... I was therefore much **left to myself**, to mingle with idle and wicked boys; and soon learnt their ways.

I never was at school but about two years; from [ages 8-10]. It was a boarding-school ... Though my father left me much to run about the streets, yet, when under his eye, he kept me at a great distance. I am persuaded he loved me, but he seemed not willing that I should know it. I was with him in a state of fear and bondage.’¹

John Newton goes on to record how his father when John was 11 began taking him with him on ships in what eventually became a career for John of putting black Africans in bondage as a slave-trading crew member. But to make a long story short, a *loving Heavenly Father came by pure amazing grace to save a wretch like me and you*. We may have a different story but all need the same amazing grace or all would be lost, if we’re not found by God, as the song says (we didn’t find God, God’s not lost – *we once were lost and now we’re found by God*). We were all blind until God made us to see, and in Newton’s case it was at sea that God opened his eyes to His grace that would deliver Newton from the greater bondage he was in on that slave ship, transforming a slave-trader to songwriter of “Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me” and made him a pastor who wanted to make God’s grace sound sweeter.

As a spiritually adopted child of God, Newton’s heart for God extended in adopting children into his own family. He adopted an orphan niece, I believe in the 1770’s, and in 1783 took another into their care. ‘we received our dear Eliza as a trust, and **as a treasure**, on the fifteenth of March [‘83] the Lord in mercy to her and to us, having **opened our hearts to receive her** ... it was hardly possible for her own parents to have treated her more **tenderly**, and that it was from that time the business and **the pleasure of our lives to study how to oblige her, and how to alleviate [her] afflictions** ...’²

In 1801, Newton wrote tenderly of another brought into his family as “my dear adopted daughter.” Elizabeth, apparently in the loss or absence of her biological family, was raised by the Newtons and we’re told ‘she became the object of [John’s] naturally affectionate disposition...and was unto him all that a dutiful daughter could be’.³

Newton knew of adoption both horizontally and vertically, and it was to him a tender and treasured manifestation of grace. He wrote other hymns and letters that celebrate adoption:⁴

Happy are they to whom the Lord His gracious name makes known!
And by his Spirit, and his word, **Adopts them for his own!**
He calls them to his mercy seat, And hears their humble pray’r;
And when within his house they meet, Thy find his presence near.

He wrote celebrating our ‘adoption in the Beloved [v.6b]. Sinners who believe in **the** Son of God, are not merely delivered from the condemnation they deserved, but are united to their Savior; considered as one with him, his children, the members of his body, and made partakers of his life and his glory ... and heaven is their home. The Lord's satisfaction in this, **as the greatest of all his works**, is expressed by the prophet in such astonishing terms of condescension, as surpass our utmost conceptions ...’⁵

That’s lofty language for adoption, “greatest of all God’s works”? For nearly 35 years of my life I’m not sure I ever heard a sermon dedicated to the subject of adoption, and here I read the writer of amazing grace saying this is *the greatest of all God’s works*, this is where grace most shines and was most amazing to him all his life.

1. The Importance of Adoption

I came across this quote this week by one of the most influential books and theologians of the 20th century, J.I. Packer in *Knowing God*: ‘Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption ... [it is] in a sense the climax of the Bible ... Adoption ... is the highest privilege that the gospel offers: higher even than justification ... [justification= *being declared right with God* – but he says higher is adoption=*being declared a son of God*] ... Adoption is higher, because of the richer relationship with God that it involves ... Adoption is a **family** idea, conceived in terms of **love**, and viewing God as **father**. In adoption, God takes us into his family and fellowship—he establishes us as his children and heirs. Closeness, affection and generosity are at the heart of the relationship. To be right with God the Judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is a greater [reality].’⁶

The classic book on the topic, *The Doctrine of Justification* by Buchanan, agrees and explains: ‘A closer and dearer intimacy than that of a master and servant is said to subsist between Christ and His people ... (John 15:15); and a still closer and dearer relation is said to exist in consequence of adoption ... (Galatians 4:7). The privilege of adoption presupposes pardon and acceptance, but is higher than either ... This is a higher privilege than of Justification, as being founded on a closer and more endearing relation.’⁷

A great theologian of another century than Buchanan, John Murray: ‘Adoption... is surely the apex of grace and privilege.’⁸

Wayne Grudem, one of the great theologians of our century said: ‘adoption ... is a big picture of what it means to be saved. It starts way back before the world was made, with God choosing us in election, and then the gospel call comes to us. He gives us new spiritual life and regeneration. We repent and believe in conversion and then God declares us not guilty and righteous in justification. Then ... adoption, an act whereby God makes us members of His own family. And I’m going to say, that out of all these things that come to us as a part of salvation, there are a lot of reasons to think that this [God’s adoption of us] is the greatest blessing of all.’⁹

That’s not a superficial statement by a shallow thinker or someone given to overstatement. That’s the careful conclusion of some of the greatest minds in church history. Beeke compiled a whole book of Puritans on adoption and sums it up as “our greatest privilege”¹⁰

Thomas Watson is one Puritan as an example: ‘Adoption is a greater mercy than Adam had in paradise ... God has made his children, by adoption, nearer to himself than the angels. The angels are friends of Christ; believers are his [family] members.’¹¹

So in church history, many Christians, especially those who knew the doctrines of grace, loved adoption and cared for literal orphans. Packer says in the doctrine of God becoming our adoptive Father ‘you can sum up the whole of New Testament religion ... If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God’s child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all.’¹²

Maybe a reason many of us don't praise God like Paul did in v. 3 is we don't understand v. 5 very well at all. We need the eyes of our heart to be opened, like v. 18 prays, to see and savor and celebrate the wonder of the grace of the Father who chose us in v. 4 and who adopts us in v. 5 by His predetermined plan, and accepts us in His Beloved Son in v. 6 for His glory and for the good of His kids.

As I read those quotes I'm thinking "if adoption is as important as so many heroes of the faith and theologians of past and present are saying it is, why haven't I heard more about this doctrine? Why do most of us not hear much about or think much about it?" Packer said in another place this is one of the most neglected doctrines.

But it can transform our lives, and make a profound and practical difference every day, and drive the way we praise and pray and think! It's not an overstatement to say this should change your life!

- for those who struggle with assurance of God's love for them, divine adoption is an assurance-granting truth
- for those who struggle in sinfully judging others by their outward appearance, whether it's racism or just pride that thinks *I'm better than those people*, understanding adoption is the antidote for division and other fruits of pride and sin
- for those who struggle to understand God's sovereignty in salvation, adoption helps us relate in down-to-earth terms
- for those who struggle in sin and wonder why we still sin or why we have to keep repenting and asking forgiveness from God if we're already saved, adoption also helps us
- for those who struggle to understand God or how to pray or what the Christian life is all about and how it's to be lived, or what Bible words like "Father" and "brother" and "sons" are really all about, adoption opens up a whole new world and makes a lot of familiar statements make more sense (so when you read in v. 2 "God the Father" and v. 3, and 270+ other times He's called "Father," you'll see it not just as a name or title, but as a precious reminder of adopting grace)

Did you know the Bible speaks "sons" or "sonship" nearly 3,000 times? Roy Zuck counts in the NIV, that altogether, 'child and family-related words occur more than 8,000 times!'¹³ And all the richness of that language is used all over the place to describe the believer's spiritual relationships. This is no small matter, this is a massively important and helpful truth that's magnificently glorious

The Importance of Adoption leads to #2. The Initiative in Adoption

Our focus today is v. 4-5, but listen as I re-read it in its immediate context the emphasis on God as the initiator, as the subject, as the Son and as the Father:

³ *Blessed be the **God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,** ⁴ just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world,** that we would be holy and blameless before **Him.** In love*

⁵ ***He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself,** according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of **His grace,** which **He** freely bestowed on us ...*

Paul could not be more clear or emphatic or God-centered that the initiative of our adoption is God's: God initiates, God chooses us. It's not caused by our will but the kind intention of His will [v.5b]. He predestines, He adopts. You can keep reading down to v.14 in this passage and underline all the references to God by name, title, or pronoun; I counted in my Bible almost 40x in this one sentence! Salvation is all of God! v. 6 says all glory should go to God! Don't diminish His glory by saying it's caused by what we did or decided

As Paul says in Romans 11 of God, "*From Him, through Him, and to Him, are all things* [and Paul didn't say "except salvation which was from us, *we* initiated that, and made the first step and God did the rest"—no *all things are from/thru/to God*] *to God be the glory!*"

Who takes the initiative in adoption? Not a child before it's born. It's the parent or parents that initiate the placement of this child into the new family, in some domestic adoptions today even pre-determined before the child is even born. You don't need a great theological mind to get the basic point of v. 4-5. The unborn doesn't take the initiative, he or she is just hanging out in the womb. Whether it's a pre-natal choice, or post-birth time or preschool or older time, the child is not the one choosing and causing his or her adoption. The specifics of ancient Roman and modern American adoption differ somewhat but the basic point holds: the child doesn't initiate his/her adoption. Babies don't initiate their adoption, and don't understand it all when they're young, but they can understand it more and love their father more later.

What makes the biblical term differ from some domestic adoptions in our country is the choice is not only made before the child is born ... in v. 4 it's *before the world was born!* There's no stronger way to say it was not based on us or because of something in us. Spurgeon once said he knew God must have chosen to save him before he was born, because nothing he did after he was born would cause it.

Human adoption takes place in real-time after birth, but the point is *hopeless and helpless infants (or others) don't adopt themselves!* Think of baby Moses floating in a basket by the Nile bulrushes as his mother had no choice in a difficult situation of life but to give up her son. Another is moved to adopt the vulnerable outsider, even of different ethnicity than her, and to raise him as her son, rather than let him continue on his own course to certain death. It was not little Moses' doing, it was the compassion of another, and it would be through this Moses when he was older, that God would reveal His adoption of Israel as His Son, and how Israel was to treat the orphans and foreigners among them, reflecting *His* nature.

In our adoption, like Israel's (as we'll see next week) there was nothing cute or adorable about us spiritually as we were on our course to certain death. No reason for God to be moved to set His choice and grace upon us, but v. 4 says "*He chose us.*" It doesn't say He chose us based on or because of choices we would make, or because He knew what a wonderful son or daughter we'd be, that we would be good, that we would seek after Him. It doesn't say He loved us because He first knew we would love Him (1 John 4:19 is the other way around). As we wrestle with the mystery as to why God chose us and not others, we aren't told the answer in this text or any other that I'm aware of, based on anything in us that God saw or foresaw was lovely or loveable, in fact quite the opposite.

You say, doesn't He see the future and all things? Yes, and Paul says in Romans 3 this is what He sees as He looks at humanity: *There is no one who does good ... There is no one who seeks after God ... there is no one, no not one.* Romans 5 then explains it was while we were still in that state, while we yet sinners rather than seekers, that grace came to us. In Roman times, adoption of a son was often of a young man / slave. We were not in Paul's analogy innocent little babies, but grown rebels, slaves, enemies, ungodly, unloving of God, unlovely and unloveable *when He came to us and chose to save us anyways!* What grace is mine! Before there was time!

On the phrase "in love" in v. 4b and John Newton marveled at the amazing grace in the Father's choosing and predestinating and adopting love to His own: 'He makes himself known unto them, as he does not unto the world; causes his goodness to pass before them; opens, applies, and seals to them, his exceeding great and precious promises; and gives them the Spirit of adoption, whereby, unworthy as they are, they are enabled to cry "Abba, Father." He causes them to understand that great love wherewith he has loved them, in [v. 7] redeeming them ... washing them from their sins ... recovering them ... preparing for them an everlasting kingdom'¹⁴

Newton believed in election and predestination (Bible words after all, he didn't make them up; neither did I). But he didn't use them as a club to beat people over the head with, but as sugar sweetening his drink and permeating everything.¹⁵ Paul doesn't use the "p" word here to debate or pick a fight, he just declares that's how God did it so we can praise Him for it (v. 3, 6). If you explain God's choosing or predestinating in v. 4-5 in a way that doesn't cause you to want to burst forth in amazed praise to God for what He did, you're probably not thinking of the same thing Paul was thinking of when he wrote those verses, at least not in the full intended measure.

Our sinfulness and willfulness doesn't negate God's sovereignty – it's why we need God's sovereign grace, if Ephesians 2 is true:

¹ *And you were **dead** in your trespasses and sins,* ² *in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in **the sons of disobedience.*** ³ *Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were **by nature children of wrath,** even as the rest.* ⁴ ***But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,*** ⁵ *even **when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ** (by grace you have been saved),* ⁶ *and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,* ⁷ *so that in the ages to come He might **show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us** in Christ Jesus.* ⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that **not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;*** ⁹ ***not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*** ¹⁰ *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which **God prepared beforehand** so that we would walk in them.*

We'll talk about some of those things more in future weeks, but I just want to encourage you to receive this mind-blowing truth and to rejoice with him at how amazing grace truly is!

There's more to be said from today's text that we'll continue next week, but for today I want us to close with a blessing of adoption.

We've seen the importance of adoption, the initiative in adoption, now in closing ...

#3. The Inseparability of Adoption

I want to end today with the fact that our adoption doesn't end. It joins one inseparably judicially permanently to their new family. Any child or young person in this room can understand this – it's one of the clearest truths of adoption we can relate to in our family, whether ancient or modern. It may be its most encouraging truth, as we think of it vertically and earthly, then spiritually eternally.

It's not initiated by us or caused by us and it's not dependent on us and not maintained by us or merited by us, but by a parent's love. A hopeless and helpless infant doesn't make itself adopted. Think of Moses floating in a basket down the Nile river by bulrushes as his mother had no choice in a difficult situation of life but to give up her son, and another is moved to adopt the vulnerable outsider, even of different ethnicity than her, and to raise him as her son, rather than let him continue on his own course to certain death. He was delivered, and later a deliverer picturing the ultimate deliverer.

Left to ourselves, we were and still would be as 2:12b says *without hope and without God*. We are **not naturally sons of God** as v. 2b says, we were "*sons of disobedience*," or v. 3b says "*we were by nature children of wrath*"--deserving God's wrath for disobedience

BUT GOD came to our rescue! We deserved wrath *but God* took the wrath we disobedient ones deserved and put it on His obedient Son Jesus instead on the cross! We were dead *but God* made us alive! We were orphaned by sin *but God* came into our dark world in the person of Jesus as a substitute orphan, and paid the costly price to bring us home, His own life as a ransom for many orphans. We were in a faraway country, as far away from Christ as possible *but God* (as v. 13 says) brought us near by the blood of Christ. All were as blind as Paul on the Damascus Road, *but God* ... I was and still would be as lost spiritually as slave-trading John Newton *but God* saved me by amazing grace, sweet-sounding, wretch-saving, lost-finding, sight-giving, heart-teaching, fear-instilling, soul-relieving, safe-keeping, danger-protecting, home-leading, praise-inspiring for ten thousand years and beyond we will sing His praise

None of us are naturally God's children, we have to be adopted to His family supernaturally sovereignly by grace thru faith, and that not of ourselves, it's all a gift of God, including faith, so that we can't boast in it...and also so we can't blow it! If I could, I would!

Now that we're in the family because we're "in Christ" as 1:3b says or 1:4 says "He chose us *in Him*," we are inseparably *in Him*. The Greek word for adoption in 1:5 is not a temporary guardian or like the modern American foster system or adoption system per se (Praise the Lord for Christians in that system and foster parents taking in difficult kids, and for young mothers who do not abort but let their child be adopted ... all I'm saying is the NT context of the term is different in some ways than ours). In the Roman society Paul is writing to in Ephesus (and Romans and Galatians) he uses a word his audience new well. It meant to adopt a son completely, legally, permanently, as a full heir to all one had.

Let's close with Romans which expands on adoption's benefits and why what God's grace did is even more amazing in dying for us. Turn to Romans 5 to see how and when our adoption took place and its results for us. We need to remember we weren't cute kids on a commercial for an organization trying to sponsor us. No one would sponsor or seek wretches like us if they could see the depth of the sinfulness of our hearts and if they hated sin like God does. There was nothing in us seen or foreseen to make us desirable. There was nothing good in us as sinners, God's enemies (Rom. 3).

Romans 5:7 *For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die.* ⁸ **But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.** ⁹ *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.* ¹⁰ **For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.** [How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure!]

Romans 8:1 *Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* [we're in Christ by grace through faith alone, Rom. 3-4]

... ¹⁴ *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.* 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!"* ¹⁶ **The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,** ¹⁷ *and if children, heirs also ...* [like we sang earlier, "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine, heir of salvation ..."]

John Newton said on this point: 'When we are enabled to view our sins as laid upon Christ, that those who come are **accepted in the Beloved [Ephesians 1:6]**, that there is no more condemnation, but pardon, reconciliation, and **adoption** are the sure privileges of all who trust in him; **O the sweet calm** that immediately takes place in the soul! It is something **more than deliverance**. There is a pleasure more than answerable to the former pain, a comfort greater than all the trouble that went before¹⁶

He never got over this doctrine of adoption, which went beyond even forgiveness in his mind. He wrote 'adoption [means] now no longer a servant, much less a stranger, but a son; and because a son, an heir already [inheriting] all the promises, admitted to the throne of grace, and an assured expectant of eternal glory. The Gospel is designed to give us not only [possibility] or a probability, but a certainty both of our acceptance and our perseverance.'¹⁷

As Newton would write letters to believers who struggled with their assurance or thinking they could be accepted by God, he kept directing them back to the biblical teaching of adoption for all who receive Christ in faith, God makes them His child forever (John 1:12)

Some of our most blessed precious promises flow from adoption

²⁸ *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.* ²⁹ *For those whom He foreknew* [like Jer. 1:5, i.e., intimate knowing of covenant relationship, ex: "Israel only have I known of all nations" God says, or Peter calls Jesus foreknown by the Father, i.e., loved in the most intimate and committed relationship beforehand. Now watch out, here comes the "p" word again in an adoption context!]

...*He also **predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;*

This chapter really is an expansion of Eph. 1:5. God predestines us to adoption as sons, and here to be more like the image of His Son. Firstborn = pre-eminent unique one-of-a-kind son among brothers. Notice as I read, how none of these adopted children will get lost along the way, because it's not up to them-it's all of God and grace

³⁰ *and these whom **He** predestined, **He** also called; and these whom **He** called, **He** also justified; and these whom **He** justified, **He** also glorified [God's the subject of each verb!]. ³¹ *What then shall we say to these things? **If God is for us, who is against us?****

³² *He who did not spare **His own Son**, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also **with Him freely give us all things?***

[This is where I think J. I. Packer is onto something when he writes that the blessings of sonship are even greater than being justified. Joint heirs with Christ, heirs of God (v. 17b) receive all things!]

... ³³ *Who will bring a charge against **God's elect? God is the one who justifies;** ³⁴ *who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, **who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.****

Adoption is judicially secured by the Judge of the Universe and our Attorney has never lost a case and never lost a child. Man does not have veto power to override God's supreme court, and the accuser of the brethren cannot condemn, because the penalty has been paid in full and the Judge has brought down the gavel, not only declaring us righteous, but declaring us His sons and daughters with Jesus and it is an invincible inseparable irreversible irrevocable verdict forever!!

³⁵ *Who will separate us from the love of Christ?* [Here's where I get the wording of this last point, "inseparability of adoption"] *Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ... [v. 38 gives the God-inspired answer:]*

³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Because of the doctrine of adoption, all those things are true. This is not just for theologians. This has practical value to hard-working everyday guys, homebound seniors, homeschoolers, housewives...

One named Lisa explains: 'Adoption is attractive to me because it is the perfect antidote to legalism ... [which] was the driving force in my life. I kept trying to be good enough for God but despaired at how impossible the task was. At the very heart I was afraid of one thing. At some point I would do something terrible and consequently lose my salvation ... [or] if you failed in any of those areas you probably were not saved to begin with.

The study of adoption has clarified the confusion I once felt. Adoption is a legal procedure which secures a child's identity in a new family ... God didn't choose to be our *foster* parent. We don't get kicked out of the family because of our behavior. We don't have to worry day to day whether or not we are good enough to be part of the family. In his infinite kindness,

God made us a permanent part of his family ... Nothing can undo the legal procedure that binds me to Christ. He died to redeem me. He signed the adoption papers, so to speak, with his blood. Nothing can cancel the work he did for me. I am free from the fear of falling away. Hallelujah!’¹⁸

¹ *Works of John Newton*, Volume I, “Memoirs.”

² *Works*, Volume IV, “A Monument to the Praise of the Lord’s Goodness and to the Memory of Dear Eliza Cunningham.”

³ *Works*, Volume I, “Memoirs.”

⁴ *Works of Newton*, Volume III, #XLVI

⁵ *Works*, Volume IV, Sermon X.

⁶ J. I. Packer, *Knowing God*, chapter 19.

⁷ James Buchanan, *The Doctrine of Justification*, p. 276-77.

⁸ As cited in *The Complete Gathered Gold*, compiled by John Blanchard, p. 13.

⁹ <http://scottsdalebible.com/assets/audio/christian-essentials/20080316WGrudem.mp3>

¹⁰ Joel Beeke, *Joint Heirs with Christ: The Puritans on Adoption*; see also his www.sermonaudio.com message “Adoption: Our Greatest Privilege”

¹¹ Blanchard, 13.

¹² Packer, *Evangelical Magazine* 7, pp. 19-20

¹³ Roy Zuck, *Precious in His Sight: Childhood and Children in the Bible*, p. 13.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ As cited by William Jay in D. Bruce Hindmarsh, “I Am a Sort of Middle-Man,” p. 52. See also <http://desiringgod.org/resource-library/biographies/john-newton-the-tough-roots-of-his-habitual-tenderness>

¹⁶ *Works*, Vol. II, Semon XI.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Robert A. Peterson, *Adopted by God: From Wayward Sinners to Cherished Children* (P&R, 2001), p. 76-78.