

# TOGETHERFORADOPTION

## Adoption's Assurance

*"When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son . . . so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Galatians 4:4-6).*

In Galatians 4:4-6, Paul not only informs us that God the Father sent His Son into the world to give us the **status** of sonship, he also tells us that He sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts to give us the **experience** of our sonship as the Spirit cries, "Abba! Father!" Have you ever wondered why it is we need the Spirit to cry "Abba! Father!" in our hearts? We probably would not have thought twice about it if Paul had *only* written, "And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son

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into our hearts" with no mention of the Spirit's cry. But that is not what Paul did. He wanted us to know *why* the Spirit was sent into our hearts, namely, to cry "Abba! Father!"

So why might we need this particular ministry of the Spirit of His Son in our hearts? I think Sinclair Ferguson touches on one of the reasons for this ministry of the Spirit in his book, *Children of the Living God*. In his discussion on the parable of the prodigal son, he writes:

"Jesus was underlining the fact that—despite assumptions to the contrary—the reality of the love of God for us is often the last thing in the world to dawn upon us. As we fix our eyes upon ourselves, our past failures, our present guilt, it seems impossible to us that the Father could love us.

"Many Christians go through much of their life with the prodigal's suspicion. Their concentration is upon their sin and failure; all their thoughts are introspective. That is why (in the Greek text) John's statement about the Father's love begins with a word calling us to lift up our eyes from ourselves and take a long look at what God has done: Behold!—look and see—the love the Father has lavished upon us" (p. 27)!

I believe that our tendency not to believe that God is really committed to us as our Father—due to our growing awareness of the sin in our hearts along with Satan's aggressive accusations against us—is one reason why God *the Father* sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts to cry, "Abba! Father!" We need the experiential assurance of our adoption as sons, and God has gone to great lengths to provide us with it.

Because of the self-sacrificial, self-donating work of God's Son at the cross, God has given us none other than the Spirit of His Son, our Elder Brother, to place "Abba! Father!" in our hearts and on our lips. According to the Gospel of Mark, our Elder Brother cried out "Abba! Father!" (Mark 14:36) on the eve of his accomplishment of redemption. So when we are told that God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts to cry "Abba! Father!", we are meant to understand this gift as experiential evidence that Jesus' work of reconciling redemption was fully accomplished. God the Father graciously sent His natural Son to become a curse for us (Galatians 3:13) that we might not only receive the status of sonship but also be eternally assured by the ministry of the Spirit within us that we are His children. God the Father spared no expense to convince us of His unfailing commitment to us as our Father.

Sinclair Ferguson continues:

"Christians often find it difficult to believe that God's unfailing love is real. This is where the knowledge and increasing assurance that we are children of God is a refuge and shield against the attacks of Satan. Just as part of his plan of action in his temptation of Jesus included the issue of whether he was really the Son of God (compare Matt. 4:3, 6), so a parallel issue arises with us. Satan will cast up to us the sins of both the past and the present; he will allure us with temptations to sin to which we may fall in the future, and then lead us to question, the reality of our relationship to God. Can we be God's children after all when such thoughts lurk in our minds and such deeds lie in our past? (*Ibid.*)

If you find that "such thoughts lurk" in your mind from time to time, let me encourage you to make it a habit to meditate on God's commitment to assure you of *your* sonship and of His love for you as *your* Father. Consider

the lengths to which God has gone to assure us of our sonship. First, He *demonstrates* (notice the verb tense of “demonstrate” - *cf.* Romans 5:8) the commitment of His unfailing love in that He sent His Son into the world to become a curse for us (Galatians 3:13) so that we might receive the gift of adoption (Galatians 4:4-5). God the Father did not wait to address our struggle until after we began to doubt His unfailing love. He was profoundly proactive. He daily demonstrates His Fatherly love for us by what His natural Son, *our* Elder Brother, did almost 2,000 years ago, namely, die for us (Romans 5:8). Fight the temptation to doubt your Father’s love by daily looking to what your Elder Brother did for you at the cross.

Second, God the Father demonstrates (notice, again, the verb tense) His unfailing love for us by giving us the Spirit of Adoption (Romans 8:15). The Spirit that God the Father has given us—who

Himself is co-equal, co-eternal with the Father and Son—is the Spirit of Adoption; and one of His primary responsibilities as the Third Person of the Trinity is to take the Gethsemane cry of our Elder Brother, “Abba! Father!” (Mark 14:36), which he cried on the eve of accomplishing our redemption, and lovingly place it in our hearts (Galatians 4:6). The Triune God does not assure us of our sonship from across the universe or even from across the room. He assures us through the Spirit of Adoption’s witness within our hearts that we are indeed the Father’s children. God the Father did much more than merely come alongside us. He sent the Spirit of His Son to actively indwell us that we might be assured that He delights in us as His children. This is adoption’s blessed assurance.

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