

TOGETHERFORADOPTION

The Prayers of Joint-heirs

Our Father which art in heaven...(Matt. 6:9).

The doctrine of adoption has profound ramifications for the Christian life. If we are true believers, it addresses so many aspects of our walk that it becomes a dominant metaphor for our salvation. One particular area of encouragement comes in relation to our prayer life.

First, consider in general the blessing that spiritual adoption opens for prayer. When Jesus teaches us to pray, “Our Father which art in heaven,” He expects us to consider the divine majesty. It is a picture of a heavenly throne, highly exalted above and ruling over the created realm. Now that this created realm sinfully stands in rebellion against the King of all creation, the idea of being called before His presence is quite a dreadful thought. The fearfulness of the thought is precisely the reason Adam and Eve hid in the Garden of Eden after they ate the forbidden fruit. However, believers are not called to stand before the throne as unlawful subjects, but as beloved children.

Amazingly, Jesus teaches His disciples to approach this heavenly King as a Father. But what grounds do we have for considering God our Father? Surely God has brought all men into existence and has extended a father-like care over His creation. But what gives children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2; 5:6; Col. 3:6), wrath (Eph. 2:3), and the devil (John 8:44; 1 John 3:10; Acts 13:10) the ability to call upon God as Father? The only reason to call Him Father is that He takes us as His children by grace.

Second, consider the foundational rights of our Elder Brother to approach the Father. In John 15:16, Jesus tells His followers, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” Having assured them of His plans for them to flourish in godliness, He then encourages them by calling them to invoke His name in prayer before His Father in order that “whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.” With this, we understand that it is fundamentally the right of Jesus to stand before the heavenly Father. Any right we have is derived from Him.

Third, consider how the rights of our Elder Brother undergird our privileges in prayer as adopted children. Praying to God as “our Father” implies coming in Jesus’ name and under His representation, for we only have a hearing as children because of our close association with the One with foundational rights to the throne of grace. In Romans 8:17, we recognize that we are God’s “children.” However, we also notice that we are only “heirs of God” so far as we are “joint-heirs with Christ.” It is clear that son-ship is granted upon union with Christ. Therefore, it is on the natural and merited rights of Jesus the Son of God that we can be called the children of God. Now, if our adoption stands upon our union with Christ, then any petition to God as “Father” must be grounded upon all that our Elder Brother is for us. Thus, if we are children of God because we are joint-heirs with Christ, our recognition of God as our heavenly Father signifies our coming in Jesus’ name.

Consider the blessing our Elder Brother provides for us. We have no access to this blessed privilege on our own. However, being joint-heirs with Christ and because of Christ, we have the loving affection of the King of heaven as we kneel in prayer. Furthermore, as believers, we desire to stand holy, blameless, and pleasing before God. But what hope do we have for such a task? Christ has ordained us to prosper in piety and affords us a hearing with His Father as our Father, so that our requests before God for thriving in godliness shall be granted. What a privilege it is to be brought into this holy family! Children of God, rejoice in your adoption, recognizing that having a heavenly Father’s love backed by the authority of a redeeming Elder Brother provides much comfort and hope.

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