

The Marvelous Privileges of Adoption, Part 1

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Now let us turn to that passage of God's Word that we have just sung, 1 John 3, and I shall read the first three verses.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is. And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

Let us again pray and ask the Spirit of God to come upon our study of the Scriptures.

Our Father, how we long that You will so instruct us and so kindle holy emotions in us based upon that instruction, that we may be able to enter in wholeheartedly into John's explanation of wonder and amazement, that we natively lost, spiritually dead, hell-deserving sinners should be called Your children, because that's what You have made us. O Father, drive away our spiritual dullness, that we may enter in with all of our hearts to John's exclamation of wonder and praise. To this end instruct us this morning; draw near by the ministry of Your Spirit to preacher and hearer alike, we pray. In Jesus name, amen.

You and I as believers must never allow ourselves to be led into what I would call the never-never land of false and disappointing expectations by the promise that there is one master key to living the Christian life. No, as I have demonstrated in my little booklet entitled *Living the Christian Life*, you and I need the whole Bible to make us whole men and women in Christ. However, there are some foundational principles, some core issues that form what I like to call the structural framework of what I like to call the entire edifice of the Bible's teaching on how we are to live the Christian life. And one such structural principle is this: you and I as believers must increasingly understand (that has to do with our noggins) and believingly embrace (that has to do with our hearts) who we are and what we are in Christ if we are to live as we ought for Christ. It was for this reason I preached 25 sermons on the Biblical doctrine of justification, that you and I might understand that in Christ we have standing before God in the light of the law in which we have nothing to fear; that by the life and death of Christ, a perfect righteousness has been wrought for every sinner who flees to Christ, becomes united to Christ by faith and is declared justified. In the same way, I'm now preaching the series on adoption. Why? Well, basically it's my privilege as one of your pastors that you as the people of God understand more clearly and believe more firmly who and what you are in Christ as adopted sons and daughters.

For in that understanding and in the believing response to that understanding, will be your growth and stability as a child of God.

We come this morning to our fourth study in this amazing privilege of God's redemptive grace called adoption. In our first study of this provision of God's grace in Christ, I sat before you three crucial distinctions which must be understood if we are to rightly understand and spiritually to profit from the Biblical teaching on adoption. Adoption is different but never separate from justification; adoption is different but never separate from regeneration. And the fatherhood of God in new covenant adoption in Christ is different from all the other fatherhoods of God revealed in the Scriptures. Having identified those three crucial distinction, I then made an earnest pastoral plea. And I repeat it this morning, and it is this: don't allow what you are learning and embracing and, I trust, are enjoying of a deeper understanding of your adoption to dilute, to distort, or to replace the other realities of your relationship to God in Jesus Christ. God is still your Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge even though He is now your loving Father. Jesus is still your Master, Lord, and High Priest even though, as I trust you will learn and be persuaded this morning, He is nothing less than your elder Brother.

Then in message two, we put our mind on the wide-angle setting and we viewed the central place of adoption in the scheme of redemption, beginning with an examination of Ephesians 1:4-6 and ending with a consideration of the teaching in Romans 8:18-25. We saw that from eternity to eternity, God's purpose to save hell-deserving sinners is nothing less than bestowing upon them through Jesus Christ the marvelous status of sons of God. And not only bestowing upon them the status of sons, but so working in them by His regenerating and sanctifying grace the very likeness of His own Son the Lord Jesus.

Then lastly, in our third message, I sought to open up in your hearing what I described as the basic meaning and significance of adoption. And I did so along three lines. We first of all looked at the means of adoption in the special word used by the Apostle Paul, that word "huiothesia" which means to place as a son. It defines a legal transaction by which an adult male (ordinarily) might be brought into a family and endowed with the status and privileges of a son--one who was not by nature that son or the kindred of the father who adopts him. So in the light of Scripture, when God uses this word, we must regard adoption as an act of transfer from an alien family into the family of God.

Then we considered the meaning of adoption in the attendant realities of adoption within Roman law. And here I was indebted to Sinclair Ferguson. The old family ties are radically and permanently severed. New family ties are legally and permanently established. And new mutual commitments are made, commitments by the adopted to the one adopting him, and commitments by the father to the one thus adopted.

Then thirdly, I said we can be helped by the meaning of adoption given to us in the helpful, Biblically-based definition of adoption in the shorter catechism, the Baptist version: "Adoption is an act of God's free grace whereby all those who are justified are received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God," to which I added this phrase: "and the solemn duty to obey the duties of."

So what is adoption? How are we to think of it? It's an act of God's free grace whereby all those who are justified are received into the number, have a right to all the privileges, and are given a solemn duty to obey the duties of the sons of God.

Now this morning we begin to take up the next major category in our study of this marvelous provision of salvation in Jesus Christ. Are you tracking with me? We looked at the three crucial distinctions with an earnest pastoral plea; secondly, the central place of adoption in the plan of salvation; thirdly, the fundamental meaning of adoption. Now we come to the good stuff. We come to consider in our fourth major category the privileges of adoption, or, if you will, why the Apostle John is carried away in holy wonder at the kind of love that would make us children of God. That's what we're going to look at in the next couple of studies. And as we begin to consider these privileges, there are two things I want to say before taking up this morning the first two of those privileges. First of all, I want to say a word about the way I'll address them. Some years ago I preached a series on adoption at a family conference, and when I came to open up the privileges of adoption, I divided them into what I called the legal privileges, the objective privileges, and then secondly, the personal subjective or experiential privileges. I was attempting to do that in my preparation for this series. But the more I labored over that distinction, the more I became convinced that these categories of the privileges of adoption really overlap and interpenetrate one another so that that division, though it was neat and had three heads under each, was artificial, so I junked it. Then the second thing I want to say is about the use of the word "sons" or "sons and daughters." The Bible is very clear that spiritual privileges in Christ know no differing levels because of sexual identity. Paul could say in Galatians 3:27-29 these very explicit words that should leave no one in any question regarding this issue:

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus. And if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise."

With respect to spiritual privileges, when God brings anyone into union with Christ, male or female, young or old, bond or free, cultured or uncultured, all those distinctions are leveled. We come in on equal footing in Jesus Christ in terms of our spiritual privilege. However, the language used in connection with adoption in the Bible is often masculine language and refers to sons of God. And God is not overly fastidious to constantly pause and say, "By that, I mean sons and daughters of God." Now in 2 Corinthians 6:18, God does say, "And ye shall be to Me sons and daughters." However, in the major passages in Romans 8 and Galatians 4, where the term "sons of God" is used, God does not constantly say, "But I also mean daughters." Why do I say that by way of introduction? Because I don't want to be put in bondage constantly to be saying "sons and daughters." Nor do I want to be accused of being sexist or a misogynist, a woman hater, if I don't say "sons and daughters" anymore than I want to be called sexist or a misogynist if I still use the masculine indefinite pronoun him/he in ordinary writing or speaking. It is wicked to charge a man as being sexist or misogynist if he simply speaks as God speaks. And so I make no apology for the fact that, though I will say from time to time "sons and daughter," I'm in the lids of my Bible in which God is not at all fastidious about speaking that language.

Alright, so much of that introduction material. Now then, what are some of the privileges of the adopted children of God? Well, I hope to open up just two of them this morning.

Number one: we are given an irreversible legal status as sons and daughters of the living God. In fact, I went back over my notes after I had fully written them, and I said, "No, I ought to change the heading so that we put it in the first person." What are my privileges as an adopted son of God? What are my privileges as an adopted daughter of God? And to say, "I am given an irreversible legal status as son or daughter of the living God." I want to look at two texts with you and have you open your Bibles to them and consider them with me. First of all, John 1. By the way, I use the phrase "sons and daughters of the living God." That terminology is used in Romans 9:26. John having established that the Christ of whom he will be writing is none other than the eternal Word, the One who was with God in the beginning, through whom all things were made. John then tells us in verses 11 to 13,

"He came unto His own, and they that were His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Now I want you to think back through these verses starting with verse 13, because those whom He describes as having received Him (that is, Christ), who are given the right to become the children of God, that is, those who believe on His name are those who were born. (They have experienced a divine begetting.) And so we learn from this passage a spiritual birth by the gracious sovereign will and act of God issues in receiving Jesus by faith. Whenever someone from the mass of humanity embraces Jesus by faith, that is, believes upon His name, entrusts himself or herself to the Jesus of Scripture on the terms of Scripture, it is because God has done something in them that issues in their receiving of Him.

And what has God done? God has birthed them. God has begotten them by spiritual operation: "...who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." The spiritual birth by the gracious sovereign will and act of God issues in receiving Jesus by faith. Secondly, receiving Jesus by faith results in the conferral of a right to adoption into the family of God. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name." Receiving Jesus by faith, which is the evidence of the operation of God in new birth; new birth leads to receiving Jesus by faith, thereby giving a right to adoption into the family of God. Thirdly, the right of adoption confers upon us the status and designation, children of God. "To them gave He right to become the children of God."

So this passage highlights the first and foundational privilege of adoption, namely, we are given an irreversible status as children of the living God. I must say to myself, having embraced the Lord Jesus as He is offered in the Gospel, in that embrace, I am given right (this is legal terminology) to be considered part of the family of God, to call myself a child of God by divine adoption, not only a child by divine birth, the regenerating work of God, the first evidence of which is an embracing of the offered Christ in the Gospel. But embracing that Christ, I am given the right to be called a child of God.

Now then, turn to our passage in 1 John 3:

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is. And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

What do we learn from this passage? Number one: because of God's amazing love and its appropriate acts towards us, we who are born of God and adopted are called children of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God." What was that manner of love? Well, John tells us in chapter 4, verses 8b through 10: "God is love.... Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

So when John says, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God," it was not a love that just gushed out of His heart and says, "O, there's some children of the devil, I love them; I'm going to make them My children; hug them to My bosom." No, no, God's love cut a swath, cut a channel through Mary's womb, through the bloody cross of Golgotha to the open tomb and the glorious resurrection of His only begotten Son. John says in chapter 4,

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins [to be the one who would receive in Himself the outpouring of divine wrath for our sins, and in light of that, turn away that wrath so that God might righteously and justly embrace us as His children]."

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God." Because of God's amazing love and its appropriate acts towards us, we who are born of God and adopted are called children of God. Secondly, we are called children of God because that's what John says we really are. We are called children of God, but that's not just a name God has given us. He says, "And we are." You see what he is doing? He's standing amazed, and he figures a few of us will be amazed. And he wants us to be certain that this is not just some nice poetic notion that we're God's children. He says that's what we are. We have been taken into this relationship in reality. And then he gives a little parenthetical statement: "For this cause the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." But then he comes back to the amazing subject. Notice now, he says, "Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is."

What is he telling us? What we are as the children of God is what we will always be. And the best of what we shall be as children is yet to come. John does not envision any who are now the children of God would cease to be His children, would somehow be cast out of the family. No, he envisions that all who have been constituted the children of God will remain children of God. The best of what it means to be a child of God is yet to come. Why? Because in our adoption, you and I are given an irreversible legal status as the sons and the daughters of the living God.

Now by way of application, let me say this: I trust that we are all learning more and more what it means to define ourselves as justified sinners. I hope as a result of

those 25 messages on justification, that more and more of us, when we wake up in the morning, can say in the language of Romans 5:1, "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." I awake and face this day as a justified man, a justified woman. All of the claims of God's law in terms of the demand to punish my sins have been met by my Savior. All of the demands of the law for perfect righteousness in order to be accepted by God have been met in my substitute and my head, the Lord Jesus. I am a having-been-justified man. There are no claims of the law unmet with respect to me. It's authority, it's governing principles and power and direction I gladly embrace. But its sanctions, its condemnation, its promise of reward for obedience has nothing to do with me. I am a having-been-justified-by-faith man, for Romans 8:1 says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Regardless of how I feel, regardless of how oppressed or depressed I might be in the light of a recent fall before a besetting sin, if I'm a justified man, woman, boy, or girl--no condemnation! For me the day of judgment has come and past.

I hope you are regulating your life more and more by those realities. Well, in the same way, on any given day you wake up, you may feel like a disowned soaking brat who no one in the universe would want to own as a child. But if you have embraced Christ as He is offered in the Gospel, according to John 1, if you have received Him, God has given you the right to be called His child. And according to 1 John 3, having been given that name and title because that's what you are, that's what you ever will be, and the best is yet to come. And you and I need to learn to regulate life by that reality. My Savior says to me, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven...." And even when you are confessing your sins, which you must do, you are confessing them to your Father. When you say, "Forgive us our trespasses, forgive us our debts," it is speaking to your Father. Even though you feel ashamed to come into His presence because of that sin, it does not alter your status. Having embraced His Son, you are His child by an irreversible, inviolable declaration of the family court of heaven. Each day say to yourself if necessary many times throughout the day,

"I am a having-been-justified-by-faith man or woman. All the claims of the criminal court of heaven have been silenced by my Savior. I am a having-been-adopted-by-faith man or woman, boy or girl on the basis of my Savior's work. An edict has been issued in the family court. Legally and irreversibly such I am: child of God."

You say that's some kind of mind over matter. No, it isn't. It is speaking truth to myself rather than listening to the lies the father of lies would have me speak to myself.

Trying to illustrate this, I spoke to someone who has legally adopted some children in our framework, and I said, "This is what I want to say. Is that accurate? And he said, "Yes." Then he recounted that in the family court in Morris County, when all the legal paperwork had been done, the day came when this man and his wife stood before the judge. The judge ask the question, "Do you understand that for good or for ill, you are now parents of this child fully responsible for all that the child is and does and all that may happen to him. You are entering into an irreversible relationship of parenthood."

That has echoes of what God does. God fully understands all the headaches and the heartaches you were to give Him when by sovereign grace He regenerated you and

brought you to repent and believe the Gospel. There's nothing you've done or failed to become that has surprised God. He's seen the whole spectrum of the life you've lived with all of its folly, stupidity, areas of stubbornness and blindness, times when you've not acted like a child of the King. And yet He says, "I take him to be My child with all the liabilities and all the responsibilities, and I'm committed when I'm done with him to bring him home to heaven fully conformed to the elder Brother in the family, even Jesus. That's who you are. Now do you look at yourself that way? If you're a Christian, that's who you are.

You say, "That sounds too good." I don't care if it sounds too good or too bad, let God be true and every man a liar. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." Now such we are. Why did He use that language? Because John understood that it's difficult for the true child of God, sensitive to his unworthiness, sensitive to his sin, sensitive to his failures. At times it's difficult, and that's when we need to take hold and lay hold in our minds and spirits of what God has said. This is who I am. As a justified and adopted sinner in Christ, I have been given an irreversible, legal status as a son, as a daughter of the living God.

But then secondly, as justified and adopted sinners in Christ, we are given the profound and precious privilege of becoming brothers and sisters of our elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me give it to you in the first person now. As a justified and an adopted sinner in Christ, I have been given the profound and precious privilege of becoming a brother/sister of my elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. God's work in redemptive grace is set before us in a number of ways in Scripture, a number of images or metaphor, almost all of them corporate in nature. For example, God establishing a kingdom with Christ as the King. Luke 1:32-33: "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." And when God's all done, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ." (Revelation 11:15). Another metaphor is God building a holy temple with Christ as the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:3-5). God is constituting a people to be a bride to His Son (Ephesians 5:25-32). These are some of the metaphors. God gives all these different pictures to show us what we are as God's redeemed people. However, among those, He tells us He is gathering a family, a household of faith. Jesus gave a strong intimation of this in the days of His flesh. Do you remember that incident recorded in Mark 3? It's also recorded in the other synoptic Gospels, Matthew and Luke. But Mark 3:31-34 says,

"And there come His mother and His brethren; and, standing without, they sent unto Him, calling Him. And a multitude was sitting about Him; and they say unto Him, Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren [the woman whose womb bore You, and the people that shared that womb subsequent to Your time there] without seek for thee. [Let me say by way of an aside, the Roman Catholic doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is sheer, unfounded nonsense. In the language of Professor Murray, 'For Mary to have remained a virgin after the birth of Jesus turns her from a noble woman into a witch.' Enough said.] And He answereth them, and saith, Who is My mother and My brethren? [Who do I recognize as having a familial intimacy with Me?] And looking round on them that sat round about Him, He saith, Behold, My mother and My brethren! [By My presence among the sons of men, I'm gathering My family. And My family are not those who shared the same womb with Me, but those who have been brought into an attachment to Me in which My Word regulates their thinking,

regulates their conduct. My family are those in whom My Word has effectually worked, binding them to Me and to My Word.]"

And therefore, when we turn to the Epistles, we find the terminology "the household of God." Ephesians 2:19: "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." And in Galatians 6:10, Paul uses the same terminology about doing good to those who are of the household of God. Now in that household, the Lord Jesus is the elder Brother. He holds the position of the firstborn. He is the One who has the preeminence. And in the household of God, Jesus gladly owns His place as the elder Brother, but takes us into that brotherhood without shame. Look at two verses. Romans 8:29: "For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." In God's scheme of redemption, Christ is the firstborn. All of His people redeemed by His precious blood and renewed by His Spirit are regarded as His brothers. And in Hebrews 2:11-17, there is a wonderful addition to all of this in terms of how Christ looks upon this assignment:

"For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, In the midst of the congregation will I sing Thy praise. And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold, I and the children whom God hath given Me. Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to nought Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily not to angels doth He give help, but He giveth help to the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

He's not ashamed to call us His brothers, His family. And what is the basis for this profound and precious privilege? Well, let me ask a question. What makes people brothers? You say when they have the same father. You've got it. That's it. When they have the same father, they're brothers. And this is precisely what Jesus made plain to His disciples subsequent to His death and resurrection. Turn with me, please, to John 20. That One whom He knew from eternity as Father in the inner Trinitarian relationship; that One whom He addressed on earth as Father, the obedient servant Son. Listen to what He says in John 20. You remember, He is risen from the dead; He is disclosing Himself now to Mary. Verse 17:

"Jesus saith to her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto My brethren [He didn't say, 'Go to My servants. Go to My apostles. Of all the things He could have called them, this bunch that had split and forsaken Him in the hour of His trial, He said, 'Go to My brethren'], and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God."

In those words, our Lord is underscoring two very vital truths. He is saying "He is My Father" in a way distinct from any way in which He is your Father. So He doesn't say, "I ascend to our Father." There is a distinctive uniqueness in Christ's relationship to God as Father. That's an inner Trinitarian fatherhood. No one encroaches upon that. It is unique to the Lord Jesus. But in the same breath, He says, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father. [Not a different being, not a different God, but One who is My Father is also your Father. And because we share the same Father, we are

brethren. 'Tell My brethren.]" And it is that to which God through Christ brings us in His amazing redemptive grace. That the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same with our Father, our Father by adoption, His Father by the mystery of inner Trinitarian relationship in which the Father has always been Father to the Son, in which the Son has always been Son to the Father. And you will never hear me using the terms via eternal generation or other things that would simply confuse you. There was never a time in all of eternity when the Father was not the Father to the Son and the Son was not the Son to the Father. And here's a bunch of Adamic rebels who were made in Adam children of God, for Adam is called son of God. He becomes a disinherited, alienated son through sin, and we in him. And our spiritual father is the devil. And now this God, this Father through the work of this His eternal Son who becomes true man while remaining all that He ever was as God, and through His work on our behalf, He brings us into a relationship that goes beyond that of the Judge who says in the criminal court, "I have no further claims against that hell-deserving rebel. I pardon him for Jesus' sake. I exempt him as righteous for Jesus' sake. He goes beyond that, and in the family court, He says,

"I now take him as My son. I take him and all of the liabilities of what it will mean to be his Father, and all of the responsibilities of what it will mean to be his Father. I take him into My heart. I take him into My Fatherly affections, My Fatherly care, My Fatherly discipline. I take him into the family in which My eternal and beloved Son is now their elder Brother."

Now notice, He doesn't cease to be our Lord and our Master, our good Shepherd, and all of the other things. But He does become firstborn among His brethren. And think of it, by the Spirit, Christ is present and smiles this morning and says, "I'm not ashamed to call this bunch my brothers." That's what Hebrews 2:11 says. "...for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." And He knows you. He stands in the church, eyes as a flame of fire. He knows the stupid, silly, carnal things you thought last week, the unkind words that came out of your mouth, the unclean things that came into your eyes. And you've been ashamed of them, and you've confessed them. But He stands among us this morning and says, "This is My family, the fruit of the travail of My soul, and I'm not ashamed to call them My brothers." That's who you are.

Now, does that make any difference how you live? Well, if you internalize that and believe that and begin to live each day in the light of that, it will make all kinds of difference in all kinds of ways and in all kinds of relationships. When we come to the matter of responsibilities of adoption, we'll look at some of those: seeking to be like the Father, seeking to live and pray before the eye of the Father, seeking in all things to please the Father. But for this morning all I want you to seek to grasp is that here are the two basic privileges of being an adopted son or daughter of God. You, as adopted, have an irreversible legal status as a son or daughter of the living God. And you are given the profound and precious privilege of becoming a brother or sister of your elder Brother, the Lord Jesus Christ. He stands at my elbow as an elder Brother. He's gone before me. He took my flesh upon Him; He took my human existence. The writer to Hebrews says, "Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people." And then the writer to Hebrews goes on to say we have One who feels with us in our struggles, One who can empathize with us in our temptations. We can commune with Him and rely upon Him and call out to Him not only as our High Priest at the right hand of the Father, our

good Shepherd to lead us and protect us. He's all that, but He's something more. He's also my elder Brother. And He wants me to live my life in the light of that reality and to shape the contours of how I make my way through this wilderness of this world on my way to the celestial city in the confidence and consciousness that He is my elder Brother.

Now remember, this is for those who have embraced Christ as He's offered in the Gospel. And you here who have not embraced Him, this is children's bread. But as I said last week, I hope what we have in Christ as I seek to expound it will make you jealous. That can be yours. It's in Christ, and embracing Christ, you too will have that status irreversibly given by Almighty God who cannot lie. He will constitute you His child, and once constituted His child, forever His child. "It is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is." The utter certainty that once in the family of God, always in the family of God, kept by the power of God through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

God willing, in our next study, we'll take up what is a precious corollary of having Christ as our elder Brother. Because the Bible teaches us, that as our elder Brother, He is an heir. In the Hebrew family structure, the firstborn was the legitimate heir and much more. Christ, as firstborn and elder Brother, is heir of the world the Scripture tells us. The Scripture tells us that God has made us joint heirs with Christ. Our elder Brother is going to gladly share all that is His by right of inheritance.

May God grant that as we seek to internalize what we've mediated upon this morning, God will fill our hearts with gratitude, with fresh degrees of love that will cause us to say with John, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are."

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